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MIXED MESSAGES

IT'S A GREAT MONTH FOR MARINE LIFE – WELL, SOME OF IT. Indonesia has declared its vast body of waters a manta sanctuary, while Palau has declared its large Exclusive Economic Zone a general marine sanctuary in which fishing is banned.

I hope they prove able to enforce these admirable strategies because, as a Palau conservationist says in our news pages, they are hoping to provide “a role model to be studied by other nations in the Pacific region.”

Well, let's see. As “developing” nations take the ecological initiative, will they be role models for, let's say, Western Australia?

Last year I visited that part of the world for the first time, fell in love with the diving on vast Ningaloo Reef, and raved about how whale sharks, mantas, humpbacks and other megafauna are respected as a precious resource.

But Ningaloo is a celebrated marine reserve. Further south, what is the state government up to? It has launched a somewhat embarrassing bid to cull big sharks, including that endangered species, the great white. And its multi-million-dollar campaign seems to be having anything but the desired effect.

I understand why the state must protect its tourist revenues. Shark attacks have risen lately, with seven fatalities in the past three years causing the state to be dubbed “Shark Capital of the World” (I know, to us that title sounds like a Good Thing, but it's not a closer for most holiday-makers).

Bookings for diving lessons have reportedly slumped, for example.

So the state decided to act to protect water-users, mainly around Perth. The federal government kindly granted it exemption from that pesky legislation listing the great white as endangered, and drum-lines with big baited hooks were set off the beaches.

Any 3m-plus great white, tiger or bull shark caught was to be shot dead – if it didn't die of exhaustion or attack by another shark first.

Conservationists are naturally outraged, and have held well-attended rallies on the beaches, but the authorities remain unmoved.

So all the big sharks in these parts are being wiped out, then? Not exactly.

The government isn't releasing figures, but independent observers claim that most of the sharks caught have been under the size limit (I guess the big ones are smarter). No great whites have been caught, we're told – most of those hooked are small tiger sharks.

The result of this initiative could well be that more sharks are being drawn closer to shore. Small ones struggling on the unattended hooks overnight, or weakened before release, are claimed to be attracting larger scavengers. Whether true or not, this isn't what the tourists want to hear.

In South Africa they have been developing systems that set up electromagnetic fields around beaches – sharks won't pass through them, but everything else does. This approach may not be cheap, but it's humane and seems effective – far more reassuring for nervous bathers.

I asked the Fisheries Department if it had considered such a strategy, but it didn't reply. Meanwhile, Tourism Western Australia assures me that the government's strategy is not a cull but “an attempt to provide the public with areas that have enhanced shark-mitigation measures.”

Its “suite of strategies” include education, surf life-saving areas, aerial, water and beach patrols and signage.

But TWA also points out that in Queensland drum-lines have been used along with nets for more than half a century – and there has been only one shark fatality in that state since 1962.

And that's what you call the bottom line.

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incorporating
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WORLD**

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Cover shot:
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THAT'S A RECORD-BREAKER!

I have been a **DIVER** reader for some years now, and remember when your pages seemed to be filled with stories about diving depth records, both the successful and the not-so-successful.

The scuba attempts were sometimes marred by tragedy, but usually seemed to be marked by their ability to cause controversy. I recall furious accusations of rigged computer readings, descent-line angles and so on.

If I remember rightly, much of the controversy was generated by rival contenders for these questionable records.

If it wasn't scuba records, it seemed that new freediving world records were being set metre by metre, month after month, in the various disciplines, until certain individuals using new techniques smashed them so comprehensively that everything seemed to go quiet.

Similarly, after technical divers had made a handful of attempts beyond the 1000ft-mark, that all seemed to fizzle out too.

All the divers involved in these various attempts deserve great credit for extending our knowledge of what the human body can achieve in real conditions rather than in chambers etc.

Perhaps they came so close to the real limits, however, that they have been forced to rein back on such record bids.

These days we hear more about novelty records or activities that are less likely to be



JOSEPH GOUGH / DREAMTIME.COM

threatening to life, but are deemed interesting enough to raise money for charity, such as submersion endurance attempts.

I would like to suggest a few diving endurance records of my own, and other readers may care to join in.

How about the longest an American diving instructor can go without saying: "The pool is open!" or a diving journalist can avoid the mention of "myriads of fish", "crystal-clear waters", "fish soup", or "the usual suspects"?

What about a place in the record books for the diver who manages to spend a whole day at an inland site without succumbing to the temptation of a bacon butty (unless you have a religious exemption anyway)?

Or a prize for the instructor who is strong-willed enough to teach an entire entry-level course without recommending to the trainee a single favoured brand of equipment?

Come on folks, there must be hundreds more!

MAX PERRY, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE

My first lesson was enlightening. After running through the intro talk and health & safety, we began the breathe-up exercises. I was delighted that my first dynamic dive was to more than 20m.

I'm still working towards my Freediving Level 1, but have already noticed a positive impact on my scuba-diving.

Discussing this with other club-members who are Level 2 freedivers and scuba instructors, we agreed that there were two main benefits.

The first is breathing. We take it for granted on dry land, but beneath the water doing it correctly is of vital importance. This helps with air consumption and buoyancy, adding to the times we can stay down and reducing the risk of hyperventilating.



Secondly, the freediving meditation exercises support the hassle-free environment of being weightless in the underwater world. In fact scuba-diving is another sport that works on the body and mind, and regular scuba and freediving will improve concentration and co-ordination and eventually the diver's sense of balance.

It might appear that you have to choose one or the other – the improved emotional and physical well-being resulting from freediving or the scientific insight provided by scuba – but in fact they not only complement each other but produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their individual impact on anyone.

I now do both sports, and belong to a diving school/club that offers trips where you can do one or the other or both, one after the other.

Roll on my 10-day really alternative air source trip to the South of France in September!

PENNY ROWDEN, FREEDIVING 2000 & SCUBA 2000

Waiting for the Man

I was fascinated by the article about basking sharks (*Basking With Leviathans*, March), advertised on the front cover, contents page and in the intro as being undertaken in the Isle of Man. Yet I found not a single mention thereof within the article.

Seems to have gone astray by about 200 miles and a different sea. Funny, we usually get mixed up with the Isle of Wight.

GEOFFREY CLARK, DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

Comment: We're red-faced about this because we can't explain how it happened. The Isle of Man crept into the intro and from there spread to the contents page and cover. Our sincere apologies to the west coast of Scotland, where the story was in fact set, and to disappointed Manx readers – we can only put this inexplicable error down to the pressures of moving offices!

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Free & scuba harmony

As a Master Diver with a range of other scuba-diving qualifications, it was with some trepidation that I attended my first freediving lesson.

I admit that my attendance had been driven by the fact that my daughter was the Instructor.

When diving without breathing apparatus, on one breath (apnea), meditation is used to reduce consumed oxygen by decreasing metabolism activity, lowering heart rate and shifting blood from peripheral parts of the body to vital organs.

Meditation has also been shown to increase immunity, improve emotional balance, lower blood pressure and add to one's feeling of calmness.

Freediving can also allow intimate contact with marine life because there are no bubbles to startle everything. Using slow and graceful movements, the freediver should resemble an aquatic mammal.

The tranquil approach to a freedive, without bulky scuba gear, means that the brief time spent under water can be stunning. There is less cost in terms of equipment, transport and consumables.

I'm a happy customer...

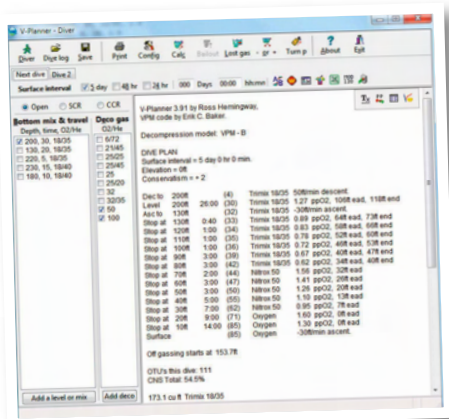
A couple of weeks back I switched my iPhone onto an App Store update notification from V-Planner. Apparently the update was for support for an additional 26 languages.

I accepted the new version, thinking that it would do no harm (not that I need to use the program for working out technical dive profiles in any other language than English).

On checking out the updated V-Planner I found that when creating a dive profile and hitting the configure button, it now spat me out of V-Planner and back to my main apps menu – definitely not an enhancement.

I emailed HHS (the V-Planner developer) to explain the issue and within 30 minutes had received a reply from its tech-support lead Ross Hemmingway, asking if I was on version 6 of Apple's iOS operating software.

In fact I have not yet upgraded to iOS V7 from V6 as I don't see the point, don't like the retro graphics



and suspect that, as a new release, it has a few bugs of its own.

Ross told me that Apple was no longer supporting iOS V6 for developers and that the bug was as a result of this, Apple being responsible for the developer toolkit.

He didn't try to persuade me to "upgrade" to V7 as a quick fix, which I appreciated. Instead, he asked me to try a few things to restore functionality to my current version, none of which worked.

Then, without prompting, he mailed again to say that he would compile a version of V-Planner that would fix the issue, and to watch out for an App Store update prompt.

Six days later I received a notification to update to V-Planner V2.55. The download took 30 seconds and I quickly configured a dive to test functionality. Problem fixed!

You don't need to work in IT to know how hard it is to have commercial software developers fix so-called enhancements and features to restore functionality to the level of previous versions. Anyone with a computer knows the problem.

So I am absolutely delighted at the level of responsiveness and the quality of service that I received from Ross Hemmingway at HHS. I am one very happy V-Planner user.

JEAN-MARC JEFFERSON, LONDON

...and so am I!

Every now and then I come across a company that is so pleasant to deal with that I find myself wishing I could do more business with it.

On three occasions I have had cause to return dive computers to Suunto for repair. In one case it was to replace a badly scratched face, and the other two for what I thought were failures but were actually my fault.

On each occasion Suunto telephoned me within two or three days to explain what it had done and returned the units within a week. It has never charged me a penny – not even return postage.

Now, I am not suggesting that Suunto does all repairs for free, but it does seem to have a well-developed sense of customer support.

Perhaps all other manufacturers of dive computers are equally customer-focused but I don't know, as I have only ever had Suunto computers. My point is that if I were considering which make to buy, I'd welcome feedback like this.

If I had known what the customer support would be like for my electric garage door-opener, I wouldn't have touched it with a barge-pole!

Just for the record, I have no connection with Suunto other than as a customer.

PAUL STEVENSON, STONE, STAFFS

Is this the best use of reef fish?

Just got back from a brilliant diving holiday at Neil Ashton's dive centre on Bimini. The diving with great hammerheads was truly amazing. You really see these sharks close up.

However, to bring these fish in to the boat, the water is chummed using fish, a great deal of which are caught by rod and line while the dives

are progressing. This seems strange to me, as these beautiful fish would be better off swimming around the reefs.

The amount of small-to-medium fish to be seen on dives was not great, and the scene on the dive-boat as the fish were cut up often resembled, to use the boatman's words, a car crash.

Great stress is put on conservation, but perhaps more important to the dive guides is the success of the hammerhead dives.

I would like to know what fellow-divers think about this sort of approach, and also ask those who have been there what they think of general safety checks in the Bahamas.

TED LEWIS

Got something diving-related you'd care to share?

Email steve@divermag.co.uk, including your name and postal address – and please confirm that you're writing exclusively to **DIVER**

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Five rescued, two dead after boat separation in Indonesia

TWO DIVERS LOST their lives and five others were lucky to be saved after the seven became separated from their dive-boat in Crystal Bay off Nusa Lembongan, east of Bali, Indonesia in mid-February.

The area is popular with divers for its submerged mangroves and rich marine life, but can be subject to strong currents. On the day that the divers became lost, rain and a rough sea had added to their difficulties.

The divers, all Japanese women, went missing on Friday, 14 February, the skipper of the 10m dive-boat telling press that he had followed the divers' SMB for about 20 minutes before losing track of it in a sudden downpour.

He said that he spent an hour searching for the divers around a pre-arranged location. However, Didi Hamzar, head of the area's search & rescue service, later told press that he believed the skipper had departed to

able to get out of the sea had they swum over to it. The fishing-boat could not approach the divers in the rough sea conditions, and a helicopter was dispatched.

Unsafe operating conditions near the cliffs meant that the aircraft managed to airlift only one of the divers, who sat some distance from the others and further seaward.

The other four were taken off a short while later by rescue-boat.

Briefly hospitalised, the divers were reported to be suffering from hypothermia, dehydration, sunburn and minor physical injuries, but none was in a serious condition.

They had survived, they later told press, by collecting rainwater in their fins and plastic bottles picked out of floating rubbish.

The five were named as instructor and dive-guide Saori Furukawa, 37; Nahomi Tomita, 28; Atsumi Yoshidome, 29; Emi Yamamoto, 33; and Aya Morizono, 27.

Remaining missing were Ritsuko Miyata, 59 and Shoko Takahashi, 29, another instructor and dive guide with the dive operator Yellow Scuba, which she ran with her Balinese husband Putu Mahardena Sembah and which had organised the trip.

Miyata's body was located the next day, floating off Serangan beach, also about 12 miles from where the divers had gone missing. Bali police told press that she "may have died about three days ago".

As **DIVER** went to press in late February, Takahashi remained missing, presumed dead, and police had arrested the skipper of the hired dive boat for questioning on suspicion of negligence leading to loss of life, but had not confirmed whether charges would be brought.

Crystal Bay was closed temporarily in summer 2012 after two divers, a man from Denmark and woman from Japan, died in the area during the same week. ■

FEWER SHARK ATTACKS

SHARK ATTACKS WORLDWIDE in 2013 fell from the previous year, according to the latest annual statistics from the University of Florida's International Shark Attack File.

There were 72 reported attacks in 2013, compared with 81 in 2012. It was the lowest figure for five years, there having been 67 attacks in 2009.

The most attacks, 47, occurred in the USA, with 23 in Florida, 13 in Hawaii, six in South Carolina and one each in Alabama, California, North Carolina, Oregon and Texas.

Ten attacks took place in Australia

and five in South Africa. A number of other countries had from one to three attacks. Overall, divers accounted for 14% of all attacks, while 46% of attacks were suffered by people engaged in board sports. Swimmers and waders numbered 31%.

Despite its relatively high number of attacks, the USA's only fatality occurred off Hawaii.

Of nine other fatalities globally in 2013, two took place in Australia, two in Reunion and one each in New Zealand, South Africa, Jamaica, Brazil and Diego Garcia. By contrast there were seven deaths in 2012 and, over



The **DIVER Dive Centre of the Year 2013**, Camel Dive Club & Hotel in Sharm El Sheikh, was among the winners receiving their coveted bronze statuettes in person at the **DIVER Awards ceremony at LIDS in February (page 12)**. And what does Camel do to celebrate a **DIVER**? Takes it diving, of course!



POLICE HAD ARRESTED THE SKIPPER OF THE DIVE-BOAT

refuel before heading back to the meeting area.

It was not clear from reports when the skipper raised the alarm, whether by radio afloat or in port.

Searches over the weekend were hampered by strong winds and rain. Relatives were beginning to despair when, on Monday 17 February, five of the group were spotted by a passing fishing vessel. They were sitting on a reef near the small island of Nusa Penida, off south-eastern Bali and about 12 miles from where they had gone missing.

The reef was only 300m or so from the island shore, but sheer cliffs meant that the women would not have been

TWO LIVEABOARDS SINK IN

TWO LIVEABOARD DIVE-BOATS

sank off the coast of Thailand within a month, without loss of life.

Ranong's Aladdin Dive Safari lost its vessel *Flying Carpet* while under way between Koh Bon and Koh Tachai islands, at the end of January.

A company spokesman told the *Phuket Gazette* that a rope fouled the boat's propeller, causing the prop to break and pierce the wooden hull.

Thirteen charterers and crew were taken off by a nearby vessel, the Phuket-based *Peter Pan*.

The director of the Similan Islands' national park, of which Bon and Tachai Islands are a part, told press that the *Flying Carpet's* hull was

"clearly of poor quality".

The vessel was not registered to operate in the park but had sunk outside park boundaries. A Swedish diving instructor aboard the *Peter Pan* took video of the sinking as his vessel lay alongside the doomed dive-boat, which capsized before sinking.

"People threw themselves headlong into the water," Dennis Karlsson told the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. "Some were sucked under the water with the boat before they resurfaced and were pulled out."

"It was really amazing that everyone survived."

As **DIVER** went to press, Aladdin Dive Safari had taken down its

LAST YEAR

the 10 years from 2003, an average of six deaths a year.

The ISAF is administered by the Florida Museum of Natural History, under the auspices of the American Elasmobranch Society. Its database goes back to the mid-1500s.

Its statistics are, it says, for unprovoked attacks and do not include situations where "a person initiates contact with a shark".

Also omitted are any incidents occurring in aquariums or where sharks have fed on people thought to have already been dead.

www.flmnh.ufl.edu ■

RESPECT TO LEO

US FILM ACTOR Leonardo DiCaprio has given US \$3 million to the Oceana conservation organisation for its work in researching and campaigning for the protection of sharks, rays and other marine creatures.

Crucial challenges include persuading governments around the world to agree to, and enforce effectively, sustainable catch quotas, and seeking bans or reductions in the use of giant drift-gill nets which, apart from targeting threatened species, cause so much destruction in the form of unwanted by-catch.

Last November the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation awarded another \$3m grant to the World Wildlife Fund in support of a plan to help wild tigers in Nepal double in population by 2022. ■

THAILAND

website and was not contactable.

In late February *Blue Star*, a wooden-hulled craft 27.5m long with 18 cabins and run by Phuket's Chalong Sea Sport, sank in Burmese waters after succumbing to a fire.

The boat was on a week's diving safari with 20 people aboard. All were evacuated successfully by a passing fishing vessel.

Finn Pekka Torri, principal of Chalong Sea Sport, told regional press that an electrical fault was thought to have caused the fire, although this required confirmation.

Enquiries addressed to Chalong Sea Sport remained unanswered as DIVER went to press.

UK diving holiday specialist goes under

LONGWOOD HOLIDAYS, a well-known supplier of budget diving holidays to Egypt, Greece, Cyprus and the Channel Islands, went into liquidation in February.

Longwood was an ATOL member and, under guidelines issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), customers abroad at the time of the closure ended their holidays and flew home as planned, while those who had booked and paid for holidays were reimbursed.

On 13 February the CAA stated that it had "stepped in to protect holidaymakers booked with Preston Travel (CI) Ltd after the company ceased trading today, with an estimated 150 consumers currently abroad and approximately 1700 with forward bookings". Preston Travel was the parent company of Longwood Holidays, Preston Holidays and Amathus Holidays.

The CAA was "working with accommodation-providers to make sure all affected consumers can remain in their accommodation" and, if they were asked to pay again for their accommodation, they could "make a claim for a refund through the ATOL scheme".

Flight tickets home were "still valid" and customers were advised to "check-in as normal".

For those yet to travel, ABTA advised them to "contact their travel agent in the first instance; they will be able to provide assistance and possibly book an alternative holiday".

While those whose holidays included flights needed to contact the CAA, ABTA's Travel Clinic advised on "how customers can make a claim" for reimbursement on holidays which did not involve flights.

As DIVER went to press, it had not received any reports from customers unable to get home or who had not been recompensed for a holiday booked. ■

THE BIG QUESTION

Eminently clubbable

Who said club-diving is fading out? Well, we have on occasions, but when we put the simple question "Do you belong to a dive club?", 57% of you said yes, leaving an (admittedly sizeable) minority to plough their own furrow.

NO...

"What exactly is the point unless you don't have any diving friends?" Jernej Burkeljca

"Haven't the time any more!" Lee

"Most of my diving is overseas, which I arrange myself." Robert Porter

"I used to but I moved and haven't found a new one." Michael Hayle

"Not any more – it went BSAC and we just don't need to deal with officers to go diving." Chris Mitchell

"Too often clubs appear like arms of a business trying to soft-sell courses." Huw Rees

"Not at the moment, but as I'm planning to get more into UK diving it's something I intend to do." Dave Barber

"But with four divers in the house you could say we're a club." Noel Slevin

"Too many politics and not enough diving." Emma Lane

"Once, but so little got arranged that I now just dive with friends in the UK, and with PADI centres when overseas." Anthony

"Most clubs have too many rules and regulations. With the Internet you can always find places where like-minded people are going." Olly

"I intend to join one this year – looking around." Caroline Hardie

YES...

"But it's one we run ourselves and it's free!" Ben Thom-Wood

"A bit greedy, I'm in three – two recreational and one tech." Martin Williams

"Pooled resources means reduced costs." Dale R

"I'm glad I decided to join a smaller local club as opposed to a bigger and less friendly one." Paulo Saraiva

"A club that has about 40 PADI and 10 BSAC members." John Orr

"BSAC/PADI are global communities, but you can't beat meeting up and diving with friends." John Williams

"It's a great way to meet people and always have someone reliable to dive with." Andrew Marmion

"Great training and trips with like-minded people, and always someone to have a beer with on a Wednesday." Dan Sumners

"A club is a fantastic way to interact with other divers." Geoff Howard

"Should have joined one years ago. It's a chance to learn from those with more experience." Ian Davies

"We go on trips together in the UK and overseas, have pool nights, lots of training and a good variety of social events. I've made some excellent friends over the years, and been to some amazing places." Arianna Moretti

"I've had so much training, help with kit, photography and marine-life advice, not to mention friendship from my club!" Katie Lewis

"I joined my local BSAC club last year and I have enjoyed every minute of it. I find it more relaxed than PADI, as I can fit everything around my shifts." Timothy Joicey

"Trips arranged for you, a ready-made pool of buddies and some social life thrown in – what's not to like?" Richard Boutcher

Go to www.divernet.com to answer the next Big Question and for a chance to win a £118 Luxfer 3-litre compact emergency pony cylinder from Sea & Sea.

To find out more about Luxfer cylinders, visit www.dive-team.com

This month's winner is Paul Anthony Gallagher.

THE NEXT BIG QUESTION

A diver you don't know is behaving badly under water. Do you intervene?

Answer yes or no, and feel free to comment

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Ancient Cornish woods revealed by February storms

FEBRUARY'S STORMS in England revealed a remarkable collection of forest remains in Cornwall's Mount's Bay. The storms shifted "huge quantities of beach sand and shingle in several places around our coastline", said the Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

The movement uncovered "the remains of ancient forests that once extended far offshore". Particularly impressive, said the trust, were "large trunks of oak, beech and pine in peat beds" revealed near Penzance.

"Geologists have used radiocarbon dating on timber from the peat beds in Mount's Bay, and it is thought that extensive forests extended across the bay between 4000 and 6000 years ago, when hunter-gatherers were giving way to early farming communities," said the trust.

"Submerged forests are evidence of the changes in the bay as sea level has risen since the end of the last glaciation."

The buried forests had been known for centuries, explained the trust, but they had been "rarely uncovered to the extent now seen at low tide on the beaches at Wherry Town and Chyandour".

"The forest bed at Wherry Town on the west side of Penzance has not been exposed to this extent for 40 years or more," said Frank Howie, Cornwall Wildlife Trustee and Chair of the county's Geoconservation Group.

"The storms have revealed 2-5m trunks of pine and oak as well as the remains of hazel thickets, with well-preserved cob nuts and acorns washed out by streams running across the beach.



Mollusc-scored oak trunk on Wherry Town beach.

FRANK HOWIE

"At Chyandour to the east of Penzance, rooted stumps are exposed *in situ* in peaty soils and massive trunks have been washed out onto the rocky foreshore.

"These forests were growing four or five thousand years ago, when the climate was slightly warmer than today. They were not flooded at the end of the last Ice Age, which happened around 12,000 years ago."

The Mount's Bay forest bed falls into one of the 117 County Geology Sites monitored and managed by the Cornwall Geoconservation Group in conjunction with the trust and its volunteers. "At Daymer Bay, north Cornwall, as well as several rooted

tree stumps, Neolithic shell middens and fossil soils containing snails, some now rare or extinct in Cornwall, are exposed," added Howie.

"This is an important exposure and research is underway on what it tells us about the climate and environment of the recent past in Cornwall.

"The storms have washed away parts of this exposure, although it is expected that tidal movements will again cover the deposit with sand over the next few months."

Divers who obtain further sightings of the remains are asked to contact Frank Howie on 01736 331007 or fmp-howie@msn.com. ■

Palau backs diving tourism

THE PACIFIC'S REPUBLIC of Palau has turned its Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 miles offshore and covers 230,000 square miles, into a marine sanctuary within which commercial fishing is banned.

Announcing the move in early

February at the UN Sustainable Oceans Forum in New York, President Tommy Remengesau acknowledged that healthy marine life was key to maintaining national income.

"Palau's economic potential lies in tourism, not tuna," he said. "Tourism, in fact, already provides more than half of our GDP, and it depends upon our pristine marine environment."

Dermot Keane, founder of the conservation organisation Palau Shark Sanctuary, said: "Strengthening sustainable eco-tourism makes perfect sense for Palau and can hopefully be a role model to be studied by other nations in the Pacific region to follow the direction our nation is taking." ■



President Tommy Remengesau of Palau moves to protect marine life.



Eroding bed of peaty soil on beach at Daymer Bay.

FRANK HOWIE



Hazel cobs and acorns washed out of peat on Wherry Town Beach.

DAVE FENWICK

EQUATOR TO THE POLES



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LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS UNEXPLAINED

A DIVER LOST HIS LIFE despite receiving an emergency lift from his dive-buddy, an inquest has heard.

Christopher Vanstone, 49, from Brixton in London, was diving 17 miles off Great Yarmouth, Norfolk on 30 August last year when he got into difficulty.

The inquest in Norwich heard how, after realising that Vanstone was in serious trouble at about 28m, his buddy Neil Cope conducted an emergency buoyant lift.

The pair, who had dived together for five years, were part of a group of six experienced divers.

Cope told the inquest that, when he looked over and saw Vanstone

with his mouthpiece out, he provided with his own back-up supply. It had little effect, and he decided that the emergency lift was required.

Taken aboard the dive boat *Raider* 5, Vanstone was given CPR for 40 minutes by Cope and boat-skipper George Buxton, a trained first-aider, before Vanstone was evacuated by rescue helicopter.

He did not regain consciousness and died on the way to James Paget Hospital in Gorleston.

A post-mortem established that the cause of death was drowning. No evidence of a severe medical problem was found.

Buxton told the inquest that

Vanstone, a friend, was a "very competent, calm and organised diver". Technical expert John Ingle, who examined Vanstone's equipment, said that it appeared to be fault-free.

Det Insp Darryl Skuse, of Suffolk Police, told the inquest that a camera of Cope's had captured footage that provided clear guidance on what had occurred and matched the descriptions given.

Norfolk coroner Jacqueline Lake concluded that why Vanstone had lost his air supply was "something we will never know".

She passed a verdict of accidental death. ■

DEPTHERAPY EXTENDS BEYOND THE MILITARY

DEPTHERAPY, THE CHARITABLE organisation known for rehabilitation of war-injured servicemen through diving, has launched a structured training programme geared not only for service personnel but also for any individual suffering from a physical or

mental disability.



Fraser Bathgate.

Deptherapy Education was launched in February at the London International Dive Show, at ExCeL.

It claims to be well-placed to train people with disabilities because of the expertise garnered through its rehabilitation programmes to date.

It aims "primarily to focus on adaptive teaching, on which Fraser Bathgate and Richard Cullen (both founders) have advised PADI and written about extensively".

It adds: "The new body has great expertise in dealing with those suffering from post-traumatic brain disorder and traumatic brain injury.

"Ongoing research with the Bethesda/Walter Reed Memorial Hospital in Washington and now the appointment of one of the world's leading experts in PTSD and TBI from the Johns Hopkins University means we are a world leader in this area of work."

The first of a planned series of UK training centres is Divecrew in Crowthorne, www.divecrew.co.uk. ■

Propeller kills diver in NZ

A BRITON WHO HAD EMIGRATED with his wife to New Zealand lost his life in mid-February when he was hit on the head by the propeller of his chartered dive-boat as he prepared to reboard it at the end of a dive.

The incident took place in the Poor Knights islands off North Island, at a popular dive-site called Landing Bay Pinnacle. Bruce Porter, 56, from West Auckland, had been diving from a 16m catamaran with fellow-members of Auckland's

Western Underwater Dive Club.

Resuscitation attempts were made after Porter was pulled aboard the boat by other divers, and he was evacuated by helicopter to hospital, but did not survive.

A spokeswoman for operator Dive! Tutukaka described Porter as an experienced dive-club member and confirmed that he was on the surface when the accident occurred.

A police investigation was launched for the local coroner and the Maritime Safety Authority. ■



Competitors in last year's event.

Submarine races at Gosport

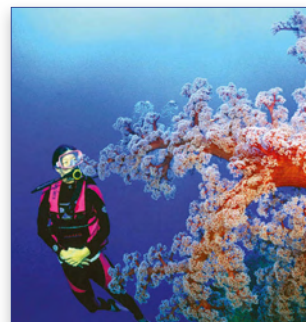
TWELVE TEAMS FROM universities in six countries and on three continents will take part in the second biennial European International Submarine Races (eISR) from 7-11 July at QinetiQ's Ocean Basin in Gosport, UK. The venue is said to be the biggest

covered water space in Europe.

The event will test students' engineering skills, with every sub designed and built by its entrant. Human-powered, they race against the clock around a demanding slalom course, with their pilots in scuba gear. www.subrace.eu ■

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Crossover traffic attracts 4000 extra visitors to London Show



IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD beyond the colourful aisles of London's ExCel Centre, storms were raging, a fire was snarling up traffic and the Jubilee Line was playing up.

Despite all that, the number of visitors at the London International Dive Show (LIDS) was well up on last year, at just under 11,800 – not including another 4000-plus new visitors crossing over from ExCel's other mid-February shows, which covered a variety of outdoor pursuits.

LIDS, a **DIVER** Group event in association with the Egyptian State Tourist Office London and Oonasdivers, was timed to tie in with the other shows, and the experiment of giving visitors such a wide choice seems to have worked.

Visitors could explore from stand to stand, settle down at the various presentation stages, and get hands-on with individual attractions such as the NoTanx breath-hold coaching sessions, Rebreather and Try-Dive pools and a new and very popular feature, the Scuba Youth Zone.

Winner of the Grand Draw prize, a £7500 two-week trip for two to Thailand, was Londoner David Norris, seen with his wife receiving their voucher at the Dive Worldwide stand.

Can't wait for the next Dive Show? It will be at the NEC in October!



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Dragged down – by a whale

A NEW ZEALAND FREEDIVING

fisherman has told how he almost drowned when a whale grabbed the catchbag attached to his wrist and dived, taking him with it.

Levi Gavin, 23, had been collecting crayfish and kina (sea urchins) with his cousin in the Horahora Estuary near Whangarei, near the northern tip of North Island.

When the pair spotted what they thought was a pod of orcas nearby, they made for the shore, but one of the creatures moved in too quickly to be avoided.

Gavin judged that he was dragged around under water for more than half a minute before the rope attaching the bag to his wrist finally parted, allowing him to ditch his weightbelt and reach the surface just in time.

Despite a temporarily dead arm, he reached the shore with the assistance of his cousin. ■

Wreck-find reports total £10 million

THE RECEIVER OF WRECK

THE RECEIVER OF WRECK *Bulletin* for 2013 has stated that the office of Receiver Alison Kentuck (pictured) dealt with “an estimated £10 million-worth of wreck material”, including “307 droits reporting over 35,450 objects”.

Wreck material reported included “51 portholes, 18 ships’ bells, eight telegraph parts and 1900 ingots plus other forms of metal cargo”.

In addition “over 200 bottles, an elephant tusk, a handheld air raid siren and a scrubbing brush were among the wreck material reported”.

Noted among 2013 recoveries were a German WW2 Dornier Do17 bomber

from the Goodwin Sands and the 3-tonne rudder from Poole Harbour’s Swash Channel protected wreck.

Other recoveries under licence included bronze spoons, leather shoes, wooden pulleys, pewter pots and other finds from the protected wreck of HMS *London* in the Thames.

“RoW also dealt with recoveries of large quantities of material from porcelain to metal ingots,” said the report. “Perhaps the most unusual was the recovery of over 200 dolls’ heads from the wreck of the *Galatea* [wrecked off Norfolk in 1898].” ■



Right tangle

WHEN A RIGHT WHALE was spotted off the coast of Georgia badly trussed up in discarded fishing equipment, a team of rescuers took to a fast boat and was able to get alongside the 9m creature and cut much of the cordage free.

Using a grappling hook with cutting blades, they removed no less than 85m of 2cm-thick rope that the whale had somehow been able to drag along.

The creature was left still lumbered with about 20m of rope with lead weights, but team-member Clay Georgia, a marine mammal biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, hoped that the whale now had “a fighting chance to shed the rest of the rope on its own”. ■

Buddy Dive liveboards withdrawn from Galapagos

TWO DIVING LIVEBOARDS have been withdrawn from operation in the Galapagos Islands, due to reported complications over licencing. The loss leaves only a handful of boats serving divers wishing to explore the area.

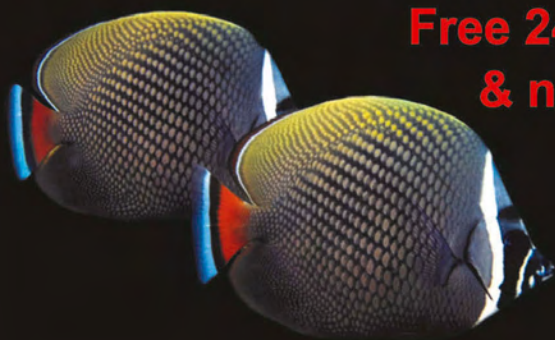
The boats belong to the Bonaire-based Buddy Dive which, approached by **DIVER** in late February, declined to comment beyond a statement published at www.buddydive-galapagos.com ■

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Leg on standing order

A WOMAN WHO LOST ONE LEG

above the knee is to receive a custom-designed prosthetic finning leg (artist's impression above), thanks to a group of mechanical engineering students.

Sue Wright, 53, a member of the British Sub-Aqua Club's Eastcote branch in west London, lost her left leg six years ago when she was hit by a van. She also suffered head and internal injuries.

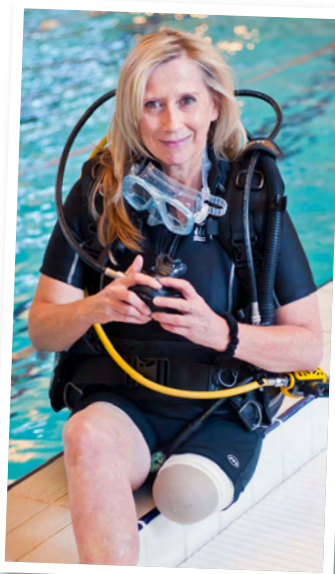
Together with one of her club's instructors, Nigel Ealand, Wright has been liaising with five undergraduates at Brunel University who have been designing a prosthetic leg to boost her ability to fin.

"I get tired as my right leg, which was also badly damaged in the accident, has to do all the work," said Wright. "However, it's not just about having a prosthetic leg I can use to help me fin. I need to be able to wear it to get to and from the dive-boat, so I can carry all my dive equipment."

"The Genium knee prosthesis I use on a day-to-day basis is electronic but, as electronics and water do not mix, I need a mechanical leg I can use for my diving."

Ealand said: "I did lots of Internet searches but couldn't find any commercially produced prosthetic limbs that would do the job."

"I did discover some research was being done in America and the



military were also looking at trying to develop something along similar lines."

"I have, with Sue, met the students and they have videoed her swimming under water and discussed ideas to deal with concerns over pressure, the lack of electronics and the fact that the prosthetic leg needs to work without hindering any movement of Sue's natural leg."

"We are now just waiting to see what the prototype will look like and how it will work. Sue and I have been really impressed with the students and the work they are doing."



Sue Wright and Nigel Ealand in the pool, with the Brunel engineering students.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CAVE-DIVERS DIE

TWO CAVE-DIVERS were killed and three injured in a Norwegian grotto in early February.

The group, from Finland, were near Mo i Rana in Nordland County in northern Norway, exploring a part of the country's largest water-filled grotto system, the Jordbrugrotta.

Fed by the Plura River, the site is popular with cave-divers.

The two bodies were located at a depth of 130m and plans made for their recovery later. The injured divers were flown out by air ambulance for recompression and treatment to minor injuries. ■

BRITS BACK MALTA

MALTA HAS RELEASED statistics for visitors to the island in 2012. Of just under 1.444 million arrivals, 84,260 were diving tourists. And of the divers, close to a quarter (20,480) were British – even though visitors including divers had come from 10 European countries.

That reflects the dominance of British visitors overall – 440,316 Brits went to Malta, the next highest group being Germans at 137,213. ■

OLDEST DIVER DIES

NORMAN LANCEFIELD, of Barry Sub-Aqua Club in South Glamorgan, has died at the age of 93. Lancefield was thought possibly to be the world's oldest scuba-diver when, in 2010, media picked up on the fact that he was still diving.

His longevity as a diver made up for the fact that he took up the sport only at the age of 58. ■

TREASURE SEARCH

A TEAM OF COMMERCIAL DIVERS started a two-month search operation in Tobermory Bay in mid-February, hoping to locate the wreck of a Spanish Armada ship thought to contain gold.

It is the fourth diving search to have been mounted by Sir Torquhil Ian Campbell, the 13th Duke of Argyll since 2008.

Campbell's family was granted rights to the wreck by Charles I in 1641, and has reportedly conducted more than 50 searches over hundreds of years. ■

BEACH CLEAN

SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE holds its nationwide Big Spring Beach Clean from 28-31 March.

Volunteers are asked to help clear up the mess made worse by Storm Hercules, which pushed much rubbish on to Britain's shores.

SAS aims to "facilitate at least 150 beach cleans involving 3000 volunteers spanning all coastal constituencies and removing a minimum of 10 tonnes of debris from our precious beaches".

Storms apart, by spring "in the absence of seasonal council beach-cleaning operations, the accumulation of litter can be truly shocking", adds SAS.

More than £5000 has been raised to support the operation, including the purchase of cleaning equipment and funding of removal services. www.crowdfunder.co.uk/the-big-spring-beach-clean ■

CONCORDIA DEATH

A COMMERCIAL DIVER died at the beginning of February while working on the wreck of the *Costa Concordia* off Tuscany.

The diver reportedly gashed his leg on a metal sheet and was initially trapped before a colleague could free him, during which time he lost a lot of blood.

He was reported to be conscious on surfacing but later succumbed to his injury. He had been installing air-holding tanks on the sides of the ship, intended to raise it off the bottom so that it can be towed into port for dismantling. ■

WRECK ONLINE

A MALDIVES HOLIDAY RESORT is to run 24-hour online coverage of diving on the wreck that lies on its house reef this month, for the second year running.

On 25 April, the Angsana Ihuru resort will stream the 10 to 10 *Rannamaari* wreck event via live webcast, with six dives over one day from dawn to dusk.

Underwater cameras placed around the wreck will stream live footage to Angsana Ihuru and www.angsana.com.

Rannamaari, a decommissioned dredger, was sunk in 1999 as an artificial reef. It lies in 28m of water. ■

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MANTA TRUST

Indonesia provides sanctuary for mantas

THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT says that it has established the world's largest manta ray sanctuary, encompassing 2.3 million square miles of ocean.

Its new legislation is said to give full protection to both the reef and oceanic species of the rays, in all the waters surrounding what is the biggest country in South-east Asia. Fishing for mantas and their export is now banned.

For years Indonesia has been the world's largest shark and ray fishery, but the country also boasts the world's second-largest manta ray tourism industry. With an estimated annual turnover of US \$15 million, this makes the species vital for many communities relying on eco-tourism.

Mantas are highly threatened, as their gill-plates are sold as a (scientifically unproven) medicinal tonic in Asia. Despite clear evidence that stocks are in decline, these fisheries are increasing their efforts and threatening the survival of manta populations.

A RECENT INDONESIAN

government-backed survey is said to have indicated that one manta ray is worth US \$1m in tourism revenue over its lifetime, compared to \$40-\$500 if caught and killed, according to Conservation International.

The new measure comes a year after local government in Raja Ampat in eastern Indonesia announced the creation of an 18,000sq mile shark and ray sanctuary. Indonesia believes that with the correct management the country could become the

world's prime manta destination.

Guy Stevens is chief executive of the Manta Trust, which researches and monitors the Indonesian manta ray population, and works with local communities to increase awareness of alternative, sustainable incomes.

"Manta rays are iconic species; they symbolise what is at stake if we choose not to protect our oceans and their inhabitants for our future generations," he says.

"The Indonesian Government's decision to legally protect manta rays is a great step along the road to effective conservation of these increasingly vulnerable species.

"I applaud the government for this positive action and I strongly urge other nations to follow in its footsteps."

Mozambique-based Andrea "Queen of Mantas" Marshall told **DIVER**: "We're elated about this, and it's just the beginning – Mozambique is next. National Geographic and I are launching a 'Pristine Seas' campaign here in April with that as one of our goals for 2014. The momentum for mantas has arrived!"

Dive Worldwide says it is the only UK tour operator to work in partnership with the Manta Trust. It has a programme of conservation holidays that includes a liveaboard trip dedicated to monitoring the manta rays in Raja Ampat.

Eleven-day trips departing on 20 August and 10 September cost from £4865pp including flights, full board accommodation (two sharing), up to four dives a day and a £100 donation to the Manta Trust. ■

MYSTERY DIVER



KENT SCUBA, MARGATE

FOR KENT RESIDENTS Margate won't be too much of a journey, but for the Mystery Diver it is, which is why I was so disappointed to arrive at Kent Scuba recently only to find its doors closed when they should have been open – very frustrating.

I had been attracted to Kent Scuba by its website and its claim: "Scuba is Our Passion..."

The website is easy to navigate and has exactly the content to get a prospective diver engaged: information about its courses combined with pages dedicated to what I would be able to do after I had qualified; descriptions and photos of local dives; information about its diving club; links to photos taken by club-members of previous dive trips; and a page dedicated to those who had achieved Master Scuba Diver with the centre – nice touch.

However, the passage of time had made its list of forthcoming dives more of a "dives we have been on" record.

APART FROM THE CLOSED doors my impression of Kent Scuba was relatively positive – it was time to give it a call.

I spoke to Karen, who answered the phone simply by saying her name, leaving me having to query whether I had the correct number for Kent Scuba.

My story was that I would be working intermittently in the Margate area in spring and wanted to use some of that time to learn to dive. I also explained that time would be tight for me so I would have to spread my PADI

Open Water Diver course over a period of months.

Karen explained that I would need to attend on Tuesday evenings and, because of my non-availability, join three consecutive courses. She went on to explain how the course would work in respect of the reading, open water dives and classroom theory.

This was an ideal but missed opportunity for Karen to mention the PADI eLearning option outlined on its website.

Kent Scuba conducts the four open-water dives in a lake 45 minutes away. I queried why it wouldn't use a location like the nearby Walpole Bay, which is enclosed and perfect for learning.

Karen explained that it always conducted its OW dives in the lake because of tides and weather. I could see her point, though for a dive store promoting the passion of scuba I would have expected the location to be switched to the sea whenever possible.

Karen did touch on organising dives in the sea but was somewhat vague as to how they would work.

I ended the call by asking if there was anything else Karen could tell me, and was a bit disappointed to be told about the medical form and nothing else.

My understanding of a "passion for scuba" would be to enthuse me about the club, activities, further courses – in short, everything I'd be able to do once I qualified.

Perhaps I caught Karen on a bad day, but from this phone call, I'm not convinced that I would have signed up with Kent Scuba. ■

FAREWELL TO LONG-TIME BUDDY

The world of scuba-diving as we know it today is about to come to an end. Ask any proper British diver to list the truly great icons of the sport, and somewhere on the list will be a Buddy ABLJ or a Buddy Commando stab jacket.

The Buddy name is deservedly synonymous with the ultimate in durability. You don't own a Buddy Commando, they say, you simply look after it for the next generation.

In fact, if worldwide thermo-nuclear war were to break out tomorrow and bury the whole of modern civilisation beneath a pile of debris, when a new race arose and became masters of the planet their archaeologists would discover Buddy Commando BCs that still work as well as they did when they left the factory.

To be fair, they were never items of beauty or the last word in comfort, and the introduction of newer designs in lightweight materials has seen their dominance even of the UK club marker reduced, but that does nothing to lessen their utility.

When you were 10 miles out in a big swell and a rising wind and the club RIB was out of sight, you were glad you'd bought a Buddy.

But now the Buddy name is to be dropped. That shell-shocking revelation was announced by AP Diving, long-time manufacturer of the Buddy range, which has decided that the brand-name is to be consigned to history and its products sold under the AP Diving label.

Good luck with it, lads, but I feel just like I did when my first girlfriend dumped me.

tumbling beyond recovery into the abyss.

Second, they risked their lives for the traditional kiss. That required both divers to remove their rebreather mouthpieces, allow the loops to float above their heads and then turn around for a passionate lip-lock. And all at 130m in a cave, don't forget.

The ceremony and subsequent decompression took a total of 190 minutes. I've heard of shorter marriages than that.

Sunken city

Archaeologists in China have discovered the ruins of the ancient sunken city of Shi Cheng in the man-made Qiandao Lake, aka Thousand Island Lake.

It wasn't the toughest discovery ever made. The city was above water until 53 years ago, when the area in which it lies was flooded after a dam was built, but that isn't important because this has to be one of the most astonishing dive-sites I've ever seen.

The remains lie at depths between 26 and 40m, but remains is the wrong word. These are proper buildings that just happen to be under water, and are what's left of a city inhabited by thousands of people for thousands of years.

The architecture is amazing and the whole thing looks like a Hollywood version of a sunken Chinese city.

Do yourself a favour and have a quick Internet search – the pics are fantastic.

Temporary site

By the time you read this, either it will have stopped raining and dried up and summer will be on the way, or a bloke with a beard, an extended family and a large collection of pets will be saving the world with the club ark.

Meanwhile, floods are where it's at, and nowhere worse than on the Somerset levels. Where there's a will there's a way, however.

Diver Dave Hallam of Street Sub-Aqua Club took the opportunity to go for a dip on what would normally be a grassy field.

To be fair, he was actually publicising just how bad things were, but it will still be a unique logbook entry.

home, back from the depths of the sea, that he has learnt to dive.

He intends to mount a search for his wife's remains this summer, and is actively seeking volunteers to help.

Earth-shaker

And while we're being serious, Jessica Read recounted an astonishing experience in the *Guardian*.

She was in the Philippines and 20m down, looking at a reef mid-dive, when the water was filled with a loud rumbling noise, the seabed began to shake and the marine life went frantic.

Jessica reported being overtaken by a high-speed turtle, and they aren't that common. Within seconds, rivers of sand were running down the reef, the seabed cracked open and the vis vanished as more sand billowed up into the water column.

Post-dive, it turned out that she and her guide had swum their way pretty much through the epicentre of a 7.2-on-the-Richter scale earthquake, and emerged from the experience shaken but unharmed.

Others were not so lucky. Two hundred died and more than 1000 more were

injured by the event on land nearby.

One detail given by Jessica is that despite being caught under water in a hostile environment that was becoming more hostile by the second, she and her guide still did their safety stop before surfacing.

That's the PADI training kicking in.

The deepest kiss

Underwater weddings? Been there, seen that, got the snorkel. Honestly, they're 10-a-penny these days.

Well, most are, but not the one where Sandra Smith married Hiroyuki Yoshida at 130m in a cave in Thailand.

Their pal Ben acted as minister and two other cave-diving friends, Pekka and Charles, were best man and witness. The whole ceremony was considerably more challenging than usual and took six months to train for, plan and organise.

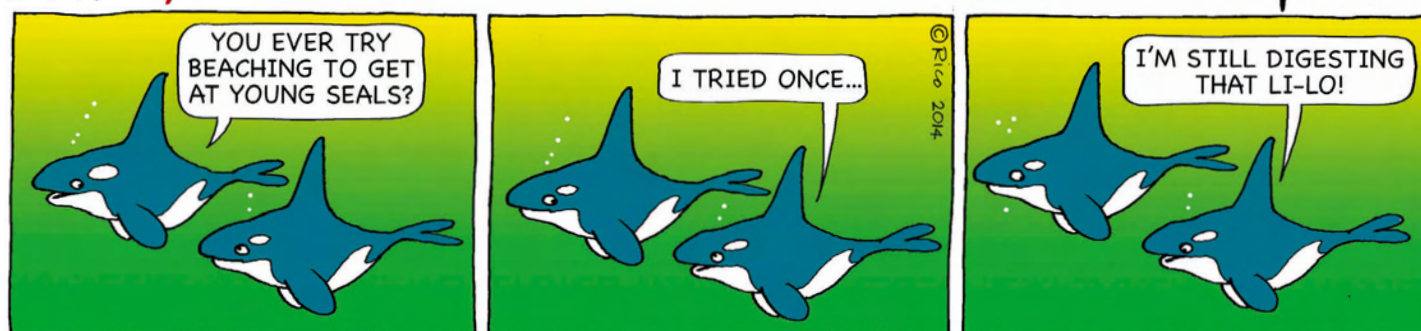
Two bits were especially fiddly and liable to end in disaster. First, the couple exchanged platinum wedding rings, using cave-reels and string to make sure that the rings ended up on the correct fingers rather than

Can't let go

Talking about incurable optimism, here's a really sad story. Three years ago, the great east Japan earthquake devastated buildings and caused a tsunami that swept away people and property in an instant.

Yasuo Takamatsu's wife Yoko was one of those who went missing, and despite the time that has gone by, Mr Takamatsu is so determined to find her remains and bring them

Sea People



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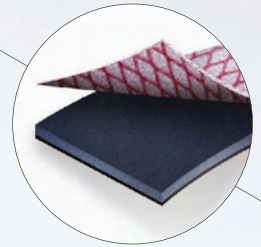


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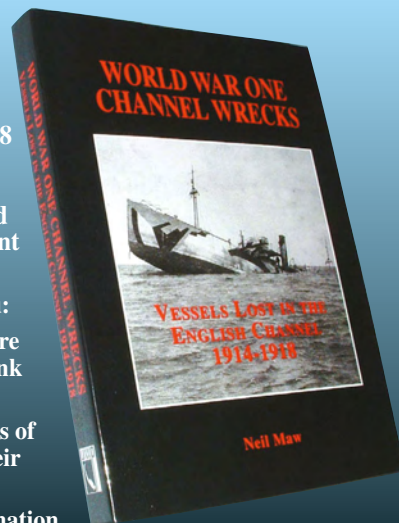
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GREAT WAR WRECKS

AS DIVERS, WHILE WE appreciate the wrecks as dive sites, the centenary of World War One underlines how we should also appreciate the sacrifice and acknowledge the loss of life involved.

So our start-of-season round-up this year provides a divers' cross-section of WW1 wrecks. For knowledgeable divers, some obvious wrecks such as the *Kyarra* and *Moldavia* have been left out or mentioned only in passing.

This is not a "best" or "most dived" list. It is not chronological. But, for a variety of reasons, each wreck is significant.

Volnay

Located in the shelter of Porthallow Bay on the east of the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall, this wreck is convenient for club training trips based at Porthkerris, Porthoustock and Falmouth.

This is the Easter issue, and on an Easter training trip in 1979 the *Volnay* became my first-ever wreck dive. I have returned many times since. I'm sure the *Volnay* fills a similar spot in the logbook of many other divers.

The 4096-ton steamship was a fairly typical large and state-of-the-art cargo ship, built in 1910 and owned by Gow, Harrison & Co of Glasgow.

After a transatlantic convoy from Montreal to Barry, she was proceeding



The majority of warship wrecks around the British Isles are casualties of World War One. The 100th anniversary of the UK entering the war falls on 4 August, so in the next few years many of our most popular wrecks for diving will become 100 years old. **JOHN LIDDIARD** sets the scene

Above: Anti-personnel warheads from 18-pounder shells on the *Volnay*. These rotting steel tubes are filled with a mixture of explosives and lead shot.

Below: The aft gun on HMS *Pathfinder*, pulled from its mounting by a trawl net, and the brass attachment for a gunsight.

alone to Plymouth. Her zig-zagging may have avoided U-boats, but not a mine laid by *UC64*, one of a field laid east of the Manacles. Forty-five minutes after midnight on 14 December, 1914, she struck a mine two miles "east by south" (about 101°) of the Manacles.

The captain made for Falmouth, but as the ship was taking on water too quickly, he aimed to beach in Porthallow Bay. The *Volnay* foundered about half a mile offshore in 18-22m, depending on tide.

According to my logbook, for that first


wreck-dive I didn't have much of a clue where my buddy was leading me, other than that the shotline was beside the boilers. What did amaze me was the scattered spaghetti of cordite, shell-casings, lead shot and fuses from the cargo of 18-pounder shells destined for the trenches in France.

These days many new divers will get a briefing from *Wreck Tour 24*, so can have a better idea about what they are diving on than I did.

On my second dive I found a prized brass fuse of my own. After the dive a member of the club showed me how to take it apart to remove the detonator and powder to make it safe.

In those days we were less well-educated about such things. The fuse has since been declared to the Receiver of Wreck and confirmed safe with the MoD.

HMS Pathfinder

On 5 September, 1914, the light cruiser *HMS Pathfinder* entered the history books as the first ship to be sunk by a submarine-launched powered torpedo, 



though not the first shipping casualty of the war, that distinction falling to HMS *Amphion* (below).

A deficiency in bunker capacity meant that *Pathfinder* was steaming at a sedate 5 knots to conserve fuel when the torpedo from *U21* struck her forward magazine.

The explosion cut off the bow just aft of the bridge and the ship reportedly sank in four minutes, leaving only nine survivors. The aft section now rests, with the main deck at 56m.

I dived the wreck a few summers ago on a beautiful calm day with perfect tides. The sort of day that divers will be hoping for on the centenary dive planned for later this year.

The wreck stands upright, so while I did drop to 64m to see the pair of high-speed bronze propellers, I could easily have kept the dive to 56m and the main deck. There is plenty to see, with deck-mounted torpedo-tubes and guns along the side and at the stern, ammunition strewn on deck, the famed row of three toilets with accompanying portholes, and ammunition scattered all over.

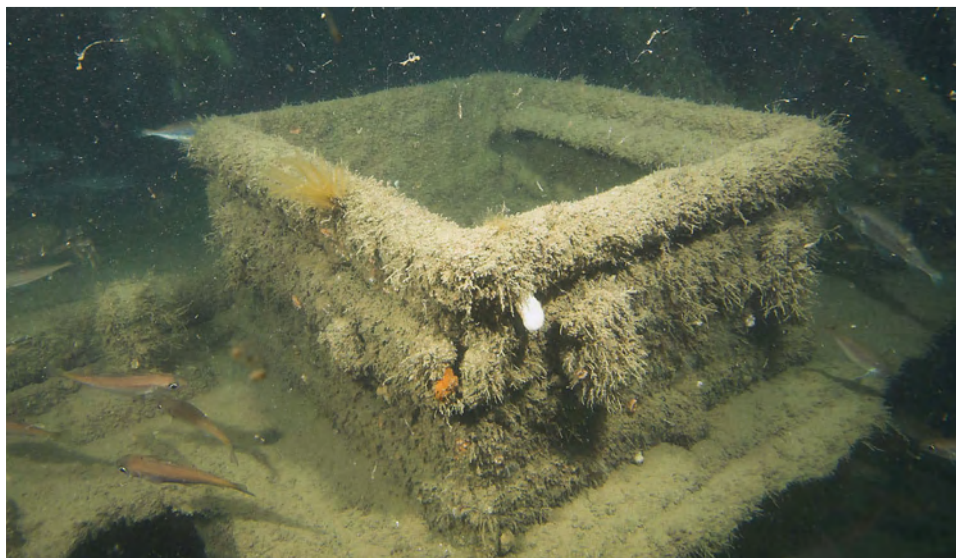
So while HMS *Pathfinder* is a technical dive requiring trimix, on a good day it is an ideal dive for a new trimix diver venturing below 50m.

When I dived the wreck it was still thought that the bow had been destroyed, as per wartime reports. However, it has since been located and dived some two miles from the main wreck.

It may have taken its time to settle to the seabed, or perhaps the reported "four minutes" is inaccurate. More about HMS *Pathfinder* on DiverNet.com

Ailsa Craig

An almost-endless list of WW1 wrecks can be dived across Lyme Bay, including the liner *Salsette*, the dredger *St Dunstan*,



Above: Hatch-coaming from the forecastle of the *Ailsa Craig*.



Right: Rudder on the *War Knight*.

U-boats, armed trawlers, the steamships *Elsa*, *Bretagne*, *Greatham*, *Lord Stewart*, *Moidart*, *Pomeranian* and *Frogner*.

Even a systematic wreck-diver such as myself has not dived them all, but my selection is the lowly *Ailsa Craig*.

Among all the big ocean-going steamers, the staple of coastal shipping all round the British Isles and across the

North Sea was the small two-hold coaster.

It had a single boiler and steam engine aft, holds forward and a wheelhouse either immediately forward of the boiler or between the holds.

Long before the wartime mass production of standard ships, coasters such as the 246-ton *Ailsa Craig* (*Wreck Tour 166*) were produced in multiples of similar design.

Coasters were the Transit vans of our shipping. You couldn't write about armed robbery without mentioning the Transit, so I can't write about WW1 wrecks without including a coaster.

There are many to choose from all round the British Isles. If you want to get technical there is a line of at least three between the Farne Islands and Eyemouth, two of which have appeared as *Wreck Tours* (150 *Havlide* and 175 *Aulton*).

I have selected *Ailsa Craig* because it was a wartime casualty, is easily accessible from all corners of Lyme Bay and the seabed is at 35m, so most divers can access the wreck.

She was carrying coal from Cardiff to Granville for the French State Railway. Captain Millikew was on the bridge, ironically ordering a zig-zag change of course, when a torpedo from *UB80*

HMS Amphion — The first Royal Navy loss

On 4 August, 1914, the *Konigin Luise*, a former Hamburg ferry pressed into service as a minelayer, set sail from Emden loaded with mines. The minefield was laid off the Thames estuary and the vessel turned for home.

Meanwhile, on 5 August the light cruiser HMS *Amphion* set out on patrol from Harwich, accompanying the Third Destroyer Flotilla.

The *Konigin Luise* was painted in the same colours as Great Eastern Railway ferries, but a trawler observed her crew throwing objects over the stern and reported this to the Royal Navy patrol. She was soon overhauled and sunk by gunfire. Forty-six of the 100 crew were rescued and taken aboard the RN ships.

Unknown to the patrol, on 6 August their course

for home took them back across the new minefield. With the mines set at 3.3m, the destroyers just passed overhead.

HMS *Amphion* was not so lucky, and with many

of the crew below deck for breakfast, they stood little chance of escape. In all 151 from a crew of 290 and 19 German prisoners were killed, many by the initial explosion.



While badly damaged, the remaining crew abandoned ship in an orderly way before the *Amphion* ran into a second mine.

This time a magazine exploded, with debris contributing to the losses by striking crew from the *Amphion* and a prisoner on the deck of one of the accompanying destroyers.



War Knight

Before Liberty ships became famous in terms of mass production, those of a "Standard" design were built for the Ministry of War Transport though WW1, at first in the UK and Canada, then later in the USA when it joined the war in 1917.

Mass production was still expanding when the armistice was signed on 11 November, 1918, with many standard ships still in the yards, so these continued to be completed after the war, and more than a few ended up as WW2 casualties.

The 7951-ton *War Knight* was the victim of a navigational mistake in a convoy of 16 ships plus escorts.

Just after midnight on 24 March, 1918, the commanding ship of the convoy escort, HMS *Syringa*, ordered a change of course in response to what may have been an explosion to the south.

Half the ships in the convoy missed the order and it broke into two groups. In trying to regroup the *War Knight* sliced into the starboard side of the tanker OB Jennings beneath the bridge.

Naptha oil leaking from the tanker set surrounding water and the *War Knight*'s deck ablaze, killing the commander and many crew. *War Knight* was taken under tow only to strike two mines laid by UC17, finally being sunk by gunfire in Watcombe Bay on 25 March, 1918.

At a seabed depth of 12m, the *War Knight* is accessible to all divers. Despite this shallow depth and exposed location, the outline of the hull is easily discernible.

The key point of interest is the massive gearbox at the forward end of the propeller shaft. The *War Knight* was driven by steam turbines, the speed of which had to be reduced to turn the propeller. Largely made of non-ferrous metals, these have been salvaged.

Hunsdon

The *Hunsdon* was in ballast from Le Havre to Belfast when torpedoed by UB94 on 18 October 1918, three-quarters of a

struck. He ordered abandon ship, and the *Ailsa Craig* went down in two minutes.

What I enjoy about small coaster wrecks are the subtle differences between them. The location of the helm indicates a central or aft wheelhouse. Here it is central.

The position of winches and ideally mast-feet indicate how the cargo was handled. The engine can be triple-expansion or, as on the *Ailsa Craig*, two-cylinder compound.



HMT Balfour

Large numbers of Admiralty trawlers were built for the Royal Navy or called into service from fishing fleets in both world wars, as general-purpose escorts,



net-tenders, submarine-hunters and minesweepers. They were cheap, easy to crew and relatively expendable.

Most of those I have dived were sunk by mines, but the 285-ton *Balfour* is an exception. On 13 May, 1918, she was escorting the steamship *Nidd* across the Channel to Dieppe.

The excitement started at 9.15pm when the *Nidd* ran over a U-boat. The sub surfaced astern of the *Nidd* and Captain Kitwood ordered his stern-gunners to open fire.

In the rush to clear its guns to join in, Captain Howe of the *Balfour* turned from his position ahead and cut across the *Nidd*'s bow. The *Nidd* struck the *Balfour* on the port side amidships, and quick-thinking Captain Kitwood ordered full steam ahead and kept the stricken *Balfour* lodged against the *Nidd*'s bow while *Balfour*'s crew climbed across.

Further quick thinking by James Howard of the *Balfour*'s crew was to run and disarm the depth-charges lined up at the stern, so they did not explode as *Balfour* went under the *Nidd*.

The *Nidd*'s gunners claimed one hit on the U-boat, later identified as UB74, though it suffered only minor damage at the time. UB74 failed to return from that patrol, being sunk on 26 May in Lyme Bay by a depth charge from HMY *Lorna*.

UB74's log was recovered by RN divers and confirmed the incident with the *Nidd*.

Diving the *Balfour*, you can see the evidence of this story. The hull is stove-in on the port side amidships where the *Nidd* struck. Among the debris beneath the stern are unexploded depth charges, so hurriedly disarmed (WT 131).

mile from Strangford Loch light buoy.

This 2899-ton steamship was one of the last maritime casualties of the war. Following behind her were the Fleet Auxiliary *Industry* and her escort, the armed trawler *Persian Empire*.

Persian Empire radioed that she had picked up survivors from the RFA *Industry* with survivors from the *Hunsdon* among them. UB92 is credited with torpedoing RFA *Industry*.

The *Hunsdon* was built as the German ship *Arnfried* in 1911 for the Hamburg-America line, then captured at Douala in German West Africa (now Cameroon) and re-registered under the British flag as the *Hunsdon* on 4 May, 1915.

Considering how close it is to Strangford Loch, slack on the *Hunsdon* is surprisingly generous, so dives can be a nice relaxed experience on neap tides, with two waves of divers so no one has to miss out while minding the boat.

The *Hunsdon* (Wreck Tour 102) is a good typical steamship wreck. With the holds empty, the main points of

Above left: Beneath the axle of a railway locomotive on the *St Chamond*.

Above right: Mast-foot of the trawler *Balfour*.

Left: Water tank alongside the engine on the *Hunsdon*.

interest are the bow, boilers and engine, and stern, where the gun is tipped over the starboard side. At just past 30m most divers will have plenty of time for a little deco and a twin-set of nitrox.

For those thinking of diving the *RFA Industry*, a slightly later Great War wreck, the charted depth is 84m to the seabed.

St Chamond

As we focus on loss of shipping, we must not lose sight of the purpose of much of it – bringing in supplies to the trench war in France and Belgium. As supplies came off the ships they needed to be moved to the front, and for that purpose large numbers of railway locomotives and wagons were shipped to France.

The *St Chamond* was carrying Pacific-class locomotives from Glasgow to St Nazaire – five of 695 supplied to French Railways through the war. They had no tenders, the intention being that they would be paired with those from locos previously “lost to enemy action”.

On 29 April, 1916, the *St Chamond* was torpedoed and sunk by *U60*, three miles north of St Ives Head, in 25m.

When I dived this wreck for *Wreck Tour 38*, I found six locomotives but local divers say there are in fact seven. So there are one or two more than the five listed as official cargo – were the records incorrect?

Perhaps once loaded there was space for more – cargo held over from a previous shipment, or queued on the dock. Or maybe the additional locos are from a different order, class or maker and covered by different paperwork.

There is plenty of scope for further investigation through diving and searching the archives. Perhaps by 29 April, 2016, some diver can provide an answer for the centenary.

Lost Beneath the Waves

This Nautical Archaeology Society initiative invites divers to mark the centenary of any WW1 wreck with a dive and commemoration as close to the anniversary as possible.

Nevertheless, you don't need to wait until then. Participating divers can always make warm-up dives on their selected wreck, gather information and turn the memorial dive into the culmination of a much larger group project.

The project will be accompanied by a Twitter feed, Facebook page and YouTube channel to which divers can contribute.

Centenary diving

HMS *Pathfinder*, 5 September 2014, Marine Quest, Eyemouth:
A technical week with the focus on diving both forward and aft sections of *HMS Pathfinder*.

RMS *Lusitania*, 9-10 May 2015 (7 May 1915), Kinsale:
Not diving, but a weekend of wreck-diving talks about *Lusitania* and other ships, accompanied by shallower diving including wrecks from WW1.



Above: Mine-laying tube with broken mine casing on *UC42*, showing the explosives inside.

Right: Starboard propeller with details that identify the U-boat as *UC42*.

UC42

Considering how much of our coastal shipping was sunk by mines, it would be a shame not to include a UC-class U-boat.

The UC class were specialist mine-layers with a line of six mine-laying tubes running vertically through the forward part of the hull.

Each tube contained three stacked mines to give a total load of 18.

UC-class boats laid minefields that trapped ships indiscriminately, from trawlers and coasters through to capital ships. They also had two forward and one aft-facing torpedo tubes and a naval 8.8cm gun, all used successfully.

Many UC-class U-boats were lost, so should I pick the wreck of one that was individually significant, or one readily accessible, or one with easy diving conditions?

I was tempted by *UC70* off Whitby (WT 10), notable for being killed by air attack from a Blackburn Kangaroo, but this isn't the easiest place to find a boat space and is frequently subject to challenging visibility.

Located off Cork, *UC42* (WT 165) is readily accessible in 28m and typically in good visibility. This submarine is recorded by German records as lost on 10 September, 1917, the date *UC42* was scheduled to return from patrol.

A depth-charge attack by patrolling torpedo-boats on 31 October, 1917, was on a submarine already long dead.

So how did *UC42* really meet its end?



One possibility is that it struck one of its own mines while laying a minefield. Another is that the crew lost control and crashed in the shallow water.

The wreck was first dived by hardhat divers from the naval base at Queenstown on 2 November, 1917, and the only damage noted was to the stern.

At some point *UC42*'s location was lost, then it made headlines in 2010 when rediscovered by local divers.

The highest point and most significant point on the dive is the starboard propeller. As on any WW1 U-boat, this carries its identity, and the relevant section has been lovingly polished repeatedly by divers' hands.

Holes in the outer and inner hull are just big enough for looking inside at the engines and stacks of batteries. In the forward section we have the mine-tubes, all still carrying mines in various states of decomposition.

Readers who know the area may wonder why I have not also featured the steamship *Aud*, significant for its attempt to support the 1916 uprising.

Don't worry, we're preparing a special extended *Wreck Tour* in preparation for the centenary.





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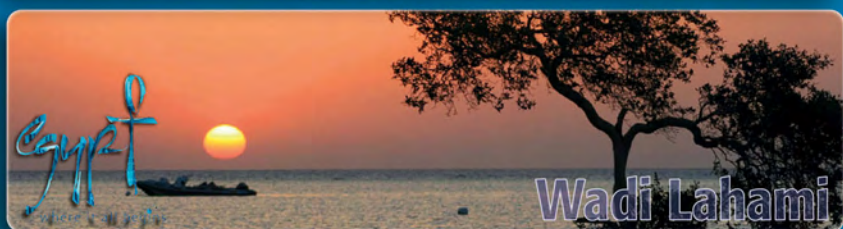
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SHOUT-OUT!

FOR THE GREAT GUIDES

I WAS A VERY QUIET, COLD, WET and windy New Year's Day in Surrey. Rather than TV re-runs, I was craving the warmth of some sun rays on my body and the feel of liquid sunshine as I slipped into a lovely warm ocean to watch the underwater world come alive before my eyes.

That wasn't on, so I decided that my dive fix would come from digging out old dive-logs and reminiscing about my most memorable and enjoyable dives.

Reading the detailed logs I keep religiously from every dive I do, it soon became clear that I had enjoyed the majority of my best dives not only for their beauty, location or marine life, but also because of the dive-guide or spotter I had.

What's the difference between a guide and a spotter? A guide shows you the reef, but a spotter shows you what's in the reef. My best dives had almost always been led by dive-guides who were also excellent spotters, whether of large animals such as sharks or macro life like pygmy seahorses.

They also had great knowledge and passion for the oceans, and would delight in showing me the best of the dive-sites where they worked, unlike more lacklustre and now forgotten guides, who treated divers more like cattle and the dives simply as a money-making occupation.



Some are good, some are poor, and some are just brilliant –
LISA COLLINS wanders down
Memory Lane with some of the
best dive-guides she has met

Passion is a key to the survival of our world's oceans – not only for conservationists, but for those who work in the water for hours each day, leading dives. Without passion, there is no thought of imparting the knowledge that the ocean and its marine life is sacred and should be treated as such.

I've lost count of the number of guides who touch marine life, picking

Pictured: Otto shows off a seaweed wig in Raja Ampat.

Below: Otto (right) on the dive-boat.

up living things and disturbing their natural habitat – “look at me, aren't I a great guide for showing you this?” – when leaving the animal alone, but taking the time to show divers its natural behaviour, would mean so much more.

Guides who think that zooming around a reef to cover as much distance as possible are just as bad, and they are often the same ones who pick creatures up. Compassion is important in a dive guide. Taking time to examine the reef in detail is one of the most important things they can do, spotting unusual behaviour or species, noticing and removing debris such as fishing-line or rubbish that could harm the reef, and teaching their divers to do the same.

Many of the best dive-guides also have a great sense of humour, and it's a bonus under water when they suddenly appear with silly grin and a floating piece of seaweed on their head.

I hope that sharing a few stories about my best dive-guides will make you stop and think about the best you have had.

My first memorable dive-guide was way back when I started to dive and take photographs. It was my first time in the Maldives and I arrived on an impossibly beautiful island resort in the north, where Kurt was introduced as my guide for the week.



Passionate about Lhaviyani Atoll and its colourful soft corals, immense amount of marine life and especially sharks, Kurt was on a mission to show me the best of the atoll.

Filling the surface intervals with stories of shark encounters, marine life and his favourite dives as well as of the islanders and the Maldives in general gave me a real thirst for travel and adventure, and my first feelings of passion for the ocean.

Kurt was a keen underwater photographer and helped me immensely with my little film equivalent of a point-and-shoot.

From that holiday on, I didn't dive only for pleasure but because I was passionate about marine life and reefs and their health, and making others aware of this as much as possible through my photography.

AFTER A FEW TRIPS with OK-but-nothing-special guides, I went to the island of Lombok in Indonesia with my daughters Megan, 12, and Camilla, 14. Both had been PADI Open Water Divers for 18 months.

Working at the dive centre were Kristen from Germany and his lovely Japanese partner Yuko. They struck me as the happiest couple I had met in a long time, and both loved the ocean.

Even on their day off you would see them hand-in-hand, fins under their arms, walking towards the shore for a snorkel. They even held hands whilst snorkelling!

So keen were they to show everyone Lombok's underwater life that they let their imaginations run riot on briefings.

Yuko's English wasn't that good, but her widely sweeping arm gestures, little dances and funny facial expressions as she tried to describe the fish we would see made me often remember her, and Lombok, with fondness.

The couple let me know when they moved on to the Maldives a couple of years later. I was happy to find they were every bit as enthusiastic and passionate about diving when I visited them there, at Island Hideaway.

I was also happy to see them still holding hands while snorkelling on their day off!

MY FIRST TRIP TO RAJA AMPAT was in 2009. I was staying on Kri Island, about 90 minutes by boat from the airport in Sorong. After a few minutes settling into my room, my Papuan dive-guide Otto appeared. He proceeded to unpack my dive gear into a large crate and carry it off.

I didn't have to lift a finger for my whole trip there. Otto would set



This page, clockwise from top left: Yuko (left) with Lisa's daughter Camilla in Lombok; shark-finning outfit found by Otto in Raja Ampat; Marco, who saved a long-awaited trip to Tubbataha; Otto in Raja Ampat finds the pygmy seahorse but is careful with his pointer.

everything up each day, change tanks, rinse my kit and even carry my camera.

Under water, Otto was almost too enthusiastic. The vast quantity of different species meant that he kept beckoning to me every few minutes to show me something new, without giving me time to photograph the subject properly.

After a quiet word, he slowed down his pursuit of interesting subjects to allow me time to get the images I wanted before bringing me to the next subject. Every subject he found was positioned perfectly for photographs, because he had listened to my instructions very carefully, bypassing anything that wasn't suitably positioned unless it was a subject I hadn't seen before.

He delighted in showing me my very first pygmy seahorse, followed by three more different, and very rare, kinds, delicately and gently pointing to the tiny creature with his metal stick.

Otto realised that diving with a

camera was difficult in a current, so would often change dive-sites if he thought the current was too strong that day, promising to go back the next day when the current would have subsided.

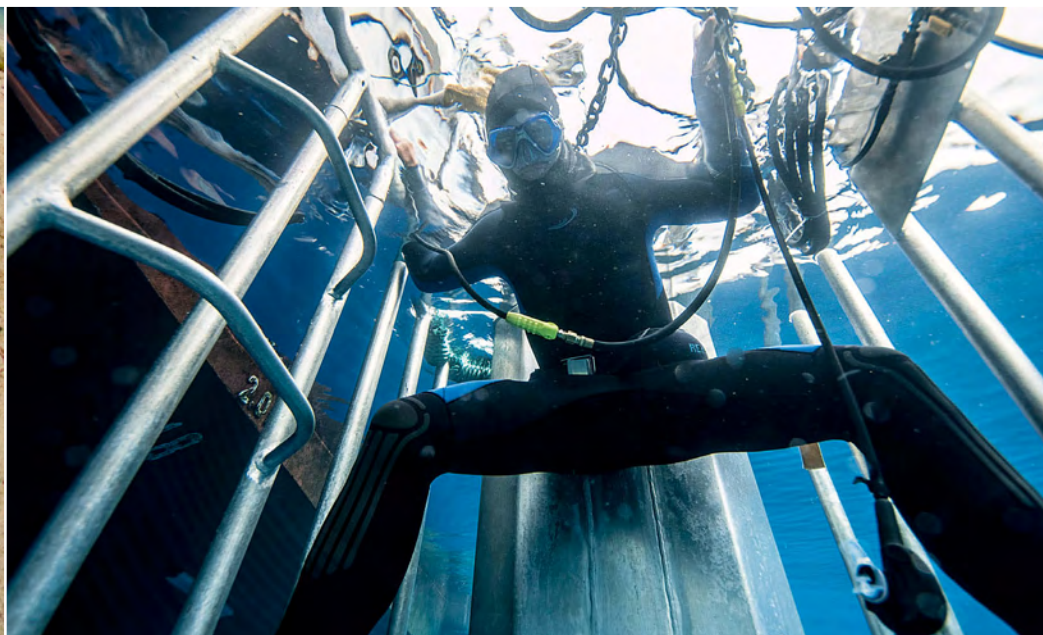
True to his word, we visited all the sites, but on days on which the current was the best.

On one of the deeper dives my first stage froze, leaving me with no air. Feeling panicked, I signalled to Otto. Very efficiently and calmly he gave me his octopus, grabbed my BC and looked into my eyes until I had calmed down sufficiently, before buddy-breathing our way to the surface.

He later stripped down and repaired my first and second stages, but stayed close to me for the remaining dives of the trip, in case I had a problem again.

Otto took us to a tiny uninhabited island between dives so that we could relax on the beach while having lunch.

He went off to find some native plants – he had told me that he could cure most things with these, and that it



wouldn't be a problem even if I got stung by a stonefish!

Whilst he was collecting the plants he came across a small illegal shark-finning operation, and was keen that I photograph it to make people aware.

NOT SO MUCH A DIVE-GUIDE as a dive god, Sven was an enormously tall Swede who worked on the liveaboard *Nautilus Explorer* when I went to Isla Guadalupe to dive with great white sharks.

My initial thought was that the sharks would be frightened and intimidated by Sven, rather than the other way around.

In fact Sven was a real gentle giant. He went into so much detail on our dive briefing that no one felt frightened by the prospect of being in the water with the infamous animals.

In fact he made us feel so excited that we couldn't wait to get in the water.

Standing on the top of the cages, manhandling divers through the small hole in the top, he made us all feel safe.

On one of our dives, feeling comfortable within the cage at 15m while being circled by a huge female white, I signalled to Sven that I wanted to get out of the cage.

He gave me the OK sign and helped me climb the ladder to stand, unprotected, on the top of the cage while the magnificent beast swam closer out of curiosity.

Having Sven's huge bulk next to me I felt very safe, and privileged to have been given this opportunity to experience the sharks in this way.

IN 2010, TWO DAYS BEFORE a long-awaited trip to Asia, the Eyjafjallajökull volcano exploded in Iceland.

With practically all flights within Europe cancelled because of the ash cloud, my dream liveaboard holiday to the remote atoll of Tubbataha, halfway between the Philippines and Borneo, looked likely to be cancelled.

The weather window for trips to Tubbataha was only 2-3 months a year,

This page, clockwise from top: Dive-god Sven in the great white dive-cage; Marco of Worldwide Dive & Sail with a turtle; Lisa Collins as she finally reaches *Philippine Siren*.

so I was sure I wouldn't be going again for a long time.

I scoured the Internet day and night, and finally managed to get a flight out of Rome the following week.

I contacted Worldwide Dive and Sail to tell them that I would be delayed, and it got Marco Santos, who was to be my dive-guide for the trip, on the job.

Not only did Marco manage to arrange for his friends to get me across several islands within the Philippines, including the now-devastated Tagbilaran, he organised another friend to take me on a two-hour journey out to sea on his tiny outrigger bangka fishing boat, to meet the liveaboard. As a result I was only two days late.

As the outrigger pulled up next to the big boat, the biggest smile awaited me, along with a very strong arm to pull me aboard. Jovial and happy, Marco gave me a big hug, then told me to get changed as quickly as I could, because he was going to make up for lost time and take me diving straight away! 🐠



While I got my bikini on, he sorted out my dive gear, loaded it onto the RIB and was ready and waiting within half an hour of my arrival to proudly show me his native country's beautiful reefs and marine life.

I HAVE HAD TWO DELIGHTFUL female dive-guides. One, Clare Rattle of Pharaoh Dive Club in Egypt, always impressed me with her professionalism, as well as her passion for the sites around Roots Dive Camp. Before every briefing, she would say: "I really love this dive-site because..."

And she really did love them, delighting in showing us a large red anemone here, some beautiful caves there or a tiny clownfish in only 2m near the entrance to a shore-dive, as if

Above left: The very professional Clare Rattle.

Above right: Cruz Gonzale clicks her fingers to attract fish in Lanzarote – they don't seem impressed.

Below: A grinning Miguel Riberio on a Wakatobi reef.

she were proudly showing us her new house, or new pet.

I also liked the fact that she had no qualms about admonishing clumsy divers who might kick up the sand, or look likely to damage the reef – especially as a lot of those divers were burly men's men.

The second woman who impressed was Cruz Gonzalez, of Native Diving in Lanzarote. She was just one of those people with a beautiful personality, an extremely cheeky smile and a total love of the water.

Guiding me around the reefs of Lanzarote, she delighted in showing me angel sharks, seahorses and beautiful caves.

Her cheeky side really came out when she took me to a dive site on the north-

east coast – home of a German nudist colony! (See feature in this issue.)

ONE OF THE FUNNIEST but most knowledgeable and memorable dive-guides I have met was Miguel Riberio, who worked in Wakatobi, Indonesia. This trip was a long saved-for and much-anticipated return to Indonesia.

Miguel was assigned to me as a private dive-guide, because the resort had a large group staying and taking up most of the other guides.

I was in luck, because he not only had extreme passion for the ocean, but also for underwater photography.

Delighting every day in showing me the best sites around, as dive-centre manager he was able to ensure that we would have them to ourselves.


Staggering entries in the calm waters, we would be dropped first at one end of the site while others would be dropped later at the other.

This meant that on almost every dive, we would see the others only for a minute or two, if at all. He would also plan my profile very carefully to get the most out of the air in my tank. Every dive lasted more than 90 minutes!

Miguel would show me something special to photograph, then go off to find something else, returning while I was still absorbed with the subject, often coming close and pulling a face, or putting my camera cover on his head, or waiting for me upside-down in a giant sponge.

He made me laugh so often that I almost lost my regulator!

As I flicked through my dive-logs, frequently smiling as I remembered happy times and the people who had made them special, I thanked my lucky stars.

I wouldn't have had my life enriched by these experiences had I not taken that step of becoming a diver. 



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DIVER RED SEA PHOTOCALL

LIDS VISITORS CHOOSE THE WINNERS

Report by
BRIAN PITKIN

THE RED SEA PHOTOCALL

Competition was organised by **DIVER** in association with the British Society of Underwater Photographers (BSoUP), and sponsored by The Egyptian State Tourist office in London and Emperor Divers to promote diving in the Egyptian Red Sea.

Entrants were invited to submit six entries in any of three categories: Divers on Reefs, Marine Life and Wrecks. More

Wrecks

The winner was *Swimming through the Tile Wreck, Abu Nuhas* by Rob White, which was also the overall winner.

Rob lives in Brighton and has been diving since 1997. He formerly ran the shark-diving experience at the Brighton Sealife Centre. He has been taking photos under water since 2005 but only since 2010 has he been using a DSLR.

His winning image was taken during a

Right: *Swimming Through the Tile Wreck, Abu Nuhas* by Rob White (Canon 550D with Tokina 10-17mm lens in Nauticam housing with Zen mini-dome port. Foreground lighting from two Inon z240 strobes mounted on housing).

Below: *Diver on Reef* by Jackie Campbell (Canon S90 in Canon housing with Inon wet ad-mount lenses and dual Inon strobes. 1/250sec @ f5.6, ISO 80).

Below right: *Colourful Carnatic*, by Saeed Rashid, (Canon EOS 7D with 10-17 zoom lens in Nauticam housing at 11mm at 1/125th sec @ f13).



than 300 images were submitted via Divernet, and the best 60 were chosen by judges Alex Mustard and Brian & Linda Pitkin.

Printed by **DIVER**, they were displayed at the London International Dive Show at ExCel in February. Volunteer BSoUP members encouraged visitors to vote for their favourite images in the three categories – and more than 1000 did so.

photographic workshop trip with Saeed Rashid aboard *blue Melody*. The diver in the foreground is his girlfriend Pash, the one further behind is her sister Chantal.

“They were both patient enough to pose for me while I took numerous shots, adjusting my lighting each time,” says Rob. Pash’s light was triggered remotely by the initial flash.

Rob wins a seven-night diving holiday

for two in the Egyptian Red Sea aboard *Emperor Asmaa* on its Fury Shoal & St Johns itinerary – or, if he should prefer to be land-based, a week at the Zabargad Berenice Hotel in Hamata.

All accommodation and diving is hosted by Emperor Divers, and return flights from the UK provided by the Egyptian Tourist Authority.

As it happens the runner-up in Wrecks was taken by the man hosting Rob’s workshop, Saeed Rashid – well-known to LIDS visitors as the photographer who organises the PhotoZone there. His entry was called *Colourful Carnatic*.

Divers on Reefs

The winner was the aptly named *Diver on Reef* by Jackie Campbell, who lives in Dublin. “I have always had a fascination with the sea and with nature,” she says.





“My two passions are scuba-diving and photography. Since learning to dive in 1996 I became instantly hooked but didn’t get into underwater photography until relatively recently.”

Under water, she always uses Canon compact cameras. “My current choice is the very capable S90,” she says. “This camera allows full manual control, which I love, and shooting with a compact allows me to switch between macro and wide angle on the same dive.”

Her winning image was taken at Gordon Reef during a summer Duxy Red Sea workshop. “I have always loved the shallows of reefs, as the colours and reflections are just so beautiful. I asked our amazing dive guide Valeria if she would model for me on one of our dives.”

Runner-up in the Marine Life category was *Magnificent Anemone* by Will Clark, taken at Marsa Shagra.





Marine Life

Will Clark also featured in this category but in this case as the winner, thanks to his shot of *Mackerel Feeding*. He lives in Street in Somerset and learnt to dive in 1993, "but I didn't become a serious diver until after returning home from New Zealand to live back in the UK, in 2006.

"Since then I have logged hundreds of dives, mostly in Indonesia and the Philippines."

Will's image, with the subject's reflection in the surface, was taken on an Oonadivers photo trip to Marsa Shagra with Dr Alex Tattersall.

On the house reef a shoal of Indian mackerel move around the bay just under the surface, filtering plankton with their gill rakers.

"Alex taught me a technique of moving my two Inon Z240 strobes as far forward on their arms to get as much light as possible on the fish to achieve a black

background by using a small aperture setting," says Will.

Runner-up in the Marine Life category went to *The Spindle* by Nadya Kulagina, who lives in Alma-Ata, Almaty, Kazakhstan and studied at Oklahoma State University. Her image of a diver and shoal was taken at Ras Mohammed.

★ A slide show of all the short-listed prints displayed at LIDS can be seen at [www.bsoup.org/BSoUP-DIVER_Prints/2014/LIDS/Adobe Web Gallery/index.html](http://www.bsoup.org/BSoUP-DIVER_Prints/2014/LIDS/Adobe%20Web%20Gallery/index.html).

DIVER and BSoUP thank everyone who manned the LIDS display and encouraged visitors to vote: Joss Woolf, Pete Ladell, Brian Pitkin, Linda Pitkin, Peter Tatton, Jan Maloney, Mike Maloney, Martha Tressler, Anthony Holley, Dave Allen, Martin Davies, Alison Mayor, Paul Colley, Jo Horrocks, Keith Lyall, Dave Smith, Mark Feldman, Pash Baker, Mike Russell, Rob White and Jane Burnett.



Top left: *Mackerel Feeding* by Will Clark (Canon EOS 7d with Canon 100mm macro lens in Nauticam housing. 1/80s @ f/13, ISO 200);

zoom lens in Nauticam housing fitted with Zen 100mm mini dome, 1/160s @ f/14, ISO100);

Above, top: *Magnificent Anemone* also by Will Clark (Canon EOS 7d with Canon 8-15 fisheye

Above: *The Spindle* by Nadya Kulagina (Nikon D800 with 16mm lens, 1/125th sec @ f9)

THE ORIGINAL AND STILL THE BEST



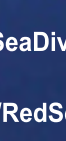
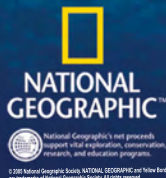
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TREWAVAS



FIFTY GRADES OF SPRAY

WE'VE TAKEN A BIT OF A THRASHING. Whipped up by strong winds, the enormous swells have spanked our sea fronts. Tons of pebbles (and the occasional misplaced seal) have been tossed over harbour walls, and mounted up in completely inappropriate locations.

It's all been highly irregular. And frankly, it's been a tad undiveable.

Unless you happened to be near to Wraysbury dive centre, which appeared to be undergoing a most impressive expansion. Once you were in the vicinity, you barely had to open your car door to make an entry. And that's a feat you can rarely achieve in a small village without attracting some kind of public attention.

Needless to say, Sky News was on it like a bonnet, creating instant stardom for the affable Wraysbury dive crew. Most impressively, the centre was kept operating while all around were people whose mortified faces suggested that the Ark had sailed, and they'd been left behind.

One Day We're All Going To Dive! Yes, for some unfortunates, it was a time when the T-shirt slogan was beginning to ring horribly true. It was also a time to learn some lessons from divers.

Even in Britain, tea and sympathy will go only so far – in these circumstances, what's really needed is a decent drysuit and a good-quality dive-light. I fully expect to see a coach-load of the Somerset levellers heading up to the next Dive Show. I'm confident that they could wangle a substantial discount for a bulk order and negotiate part-payment in cream teas.

The BBC always insists on putting its reporters on the spot, preferably overlooking a flooding river and getting drenched with rain, or battling to stay upright while being slapped by flying surf. It's all very dramatic, and makes for harmless entertainment.

However, I found myself watching on the edge of my seat while a presenter strolled about in chest-deep, flowing water with only a pair of super-sized fisherman's waders for protection.

Did the film *Gravity* pass these people by?! One misplaced step and the water will fill up that big, open rubber bag of a "protective" suit and hold you down like a very large anchor.

But such great comedy potential was completely missed by the report. Sometimes I wonder why we pay our licence fees.

Wherever there's a tale of disaster, there'll be a person who rises to the occasion and shines through. For me, that person was Izzy Ismet of Global Underwater Explorers in Portland.

I found myself riveted by his YouTube updates detailing the full, smashing force of the waves – each day a different degree of menace, a new variety of surf-splattered impact. Foaming waves, grey walls of water sucking at the concrete defences, blinding white-outs as sea water crashed into stone. It was full-on storm porn, with fifty grades of spray.

This was not the voyeuristic work of some storm-chasing tourist. Chesil Beach was reshaped and redecorated, and Izzy documented the flotsam and jetsam – plastic netting, broken fencing, lost underwear, discarded furniture – that now littered the vast, sweeping beach. And then he spearheaded the organisation of a community clean-up day. Total hero.

He surely represents the UK diving community at its very best. We may have been lashed, but we're not beaten.

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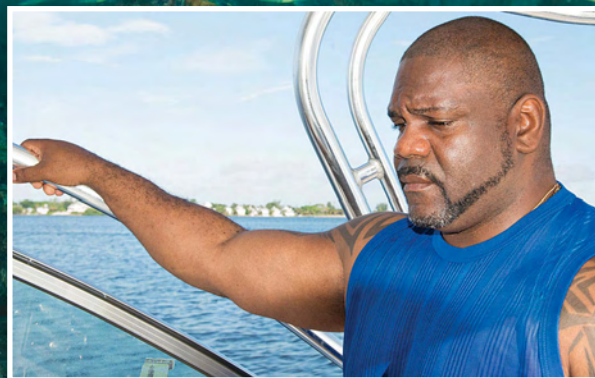
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BOUNTY HUNTER



It's a violent world in the waters off west Florida, where big guys emit sonic booms and the dive guides are armed and dangerous. **NIGEL WADE** reports



BOOM! THE THUNDEROUS sound seemed to come from everywhere at once, and the shock wave crashed through my body, making me jump. I swivelled round as quickly as I could, peering into the flattened wreckage in search of the source.

A silver cloud of baitfish hindered my view, so I finned a little closer and – BOOM – there it was again. The tiny fish scattered, and the view they left seemed to be made up entirely of the enormous head of a goliath grouper.

This was a big guy, at around the 180kg mark, and he didn't seem to like being disturbed. The predator watched me intently with his tiny eyes, then seemed to relax a little before his gills flared, and he produced that body-thumping noise again.

Were the low-frequency blasts he was producing a warning? Discretion is the better part of valour, I thought, as I backed off a little and let him have his space.

The water was warm, but visibility had suffered from the run-off of August's heavy rainfall, leaving everything enveloped in a green fog.

As I explored the rest of the wreck more grouper appeared. Though none was as large as the first, they are still impressive animals, with huge mouths that can Hoover up large numbers of the

little silver baitfish. I was diving the remains of a sunken shrimp trawler lost in severe storms off Florida's south-west coast, near North Captiva Island in the Gulf of Mexico.

The marine life in this area is

Pictured: Denise negotiates the stairs on the *Mohawk*.

Inset: Corey Hickson, bounty hunter and charter boat skipper.



prolific, and that makes it a magnet for sport-fishing enthusiasts. Place names such as Kingfish and Sailfish Roads and my temporary home at Tarpon Lodge on secluded Pine Island reflected this.

Set in beautifully manicured grounds right on the waterfront, with a private mooring, swimming pool, sports bar and restaurant, Tarpon Lodge looks and feels like a piece of old Florida, frozen in time. It's an ideal base for exploring the local waters, and attracts fishers of all genres.

On my first morning, I sat on the breakwater watching in awe as two ospreys swooped with their talons extended and scooped fish out of the water. Pelicans and herons occupied the tops of mooring-posts, keeping their sharp eyes on the ripples created by their potential prey in the glassy

waters of Pine Island Sound.

Small skiffs loaded with high-tec fishing gear made their way from Pineland Marina, their day captains laughing and joking with crewmates as they all looked forward to a day spent hunting for record-breaking specimens that would end up on trophy photos, followed by dinner plates.

My dive charter arrived at the Tarpon Lodge moorings. It was a 9m Proline walk-around Cuddy, and at the helm sat one of the biggest men I've ever seen.

Corey Hickson owns and runs Hardcore Hook & Line Charters with his wife Mirriah. He's a former pro footballer who still spends his early mornings pumping iron in the gym, and that's a real advantage, because the couple's main business is a bail bonds and bounty-hunting agency.

Pictured: A heron checks out the mirror-calm waters in the Sound.

Inset above: Corey and his enormous speargun on the edge of the Blue Hole; deputy sheriff Tim Babor on duty at the helm of his patrol-boat; goliath grouper make a thunderous booming sound when threatened.

Lee County Deputy Sheriff Tim Babor, whose day job is to patrol the waters of Sanibel and Pine Island Sound, was helping out.

Tim has an intimate knowledge of the areas we were going to be diving, and would skipper the boat while Corey and I were under water.

Scuba-diving for sport is in its infancy in this part of Florida, where local divers charter boats mainly to go spearfishing, with grouper, hogfish and mangrove snapper on their hit-lists. There are, however, hundreds of sites for sport divers to enjoy without the aid of weapons.

The seabed topography here is generally flat; the gradual incline from the Gulf calls for an offshore excursion to find any real depth and decent visibility. Don't expect the prolific,

'I WASN'T ABOUT TO PROTEST – AFTER ALL, THIS GUY HANDLES WEAPONS FOR A LIVING'

tropical coral growth you'd find a few hundred miles south-east in the Florida Keys – much of this shallow continental shelf consists of sand and shell rubble overlying a limestone bedrock.

Corals are present, but the diversity of stony and soft species is severely limited, because seasonal temperature fluctuations and high turbidity rates provide a less than hospitable environment for all but the hardiest of species.

Our two dives that morning were to involve a 20-mile run out to clearer waters and the Captiva Blue Hole, followed by a dive on the shrimper in shallower depths on the way back.

The mirror-finish of the waters reflected a few puffy white clouds and the big blue sky. The only waves were from our wake, as we powered ahead

under the relentless summer sun.

After kitting up, Corey grabbed his 6ft speargun from its rack and told me he was going to try to shoot something for a family dinner while I shot fish with my camera. "Everyone fishes here," he said. "It's what we do."

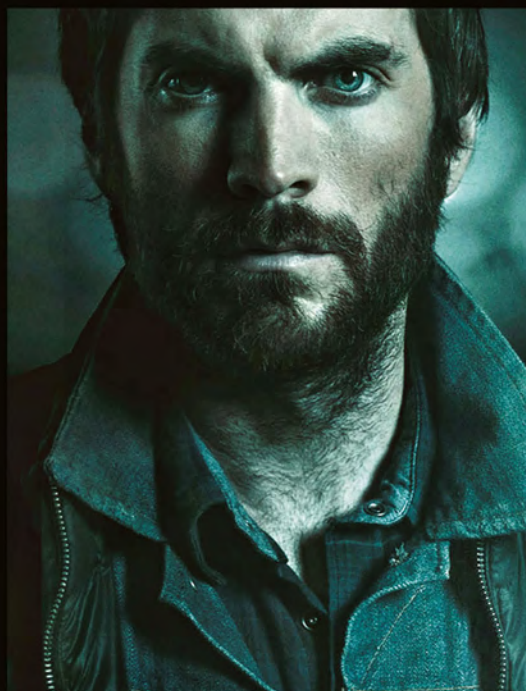
I wasn't about to protest – after all, this guy handles weapons for a living. I entered the water nervously, making a mental note to keep Corey in sight at all times, and not to get between him and his prey.

The edge of the hole, at around 25m, was a fringe of sparse coral and sponge growth. From there it was a plunge into inky blackness to about 60m.

The hole attracts huge numbers of fish for predators to hunt – bull, bonnethead and blacktip sharks are regularly encountered, I was told

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IN CINEMAS APRIL 11

though they were conspicuous by their absence during our visit.

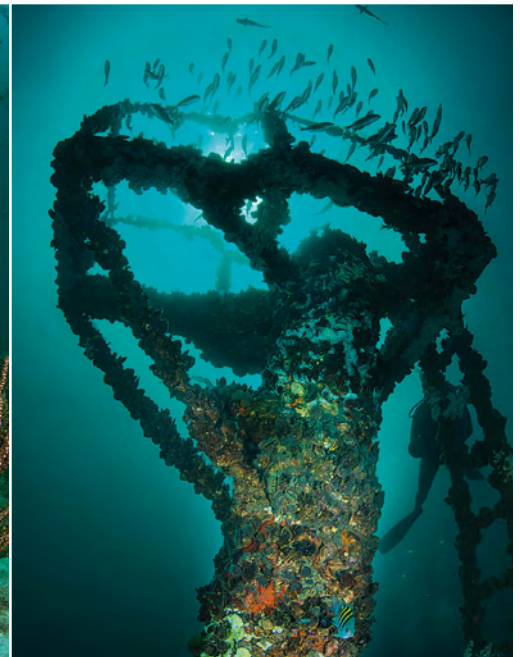
Snook, redfish and grouper share the area with shoals of snapper and Atlantic spadefish, and we found them in solid groups circling the edge of the hole. Tiny arrow crabs scuttled across some sponges as damselfish tried in vain to ward off the weapon-toting bounty-hunter.

After 40 minutes it was time to surface. My big buddy came up empty-handed but with a smile on his face, while I was just relieved that I hadn't been involved in a dive-by shooting!

Lee County Marine Services has run a programme of creating artificial reefs since the early 1990s. It has sunk some unusual items such as concrete culverts, railroad hopper carts and school buses as well as ships.

The jewel in the crown was the sinking of USS *Mohawk*. Launched in 1934, this vessel was involved in patrol and ice-breaking duties on the Hudson and Delaware rivers before the outbreak of war saw her re-assigned to the North Atlantic for escort operations.

She was involved in 14 attacks on



Above, from left: Atlantic spadefish over a small barrel sponge; the forward mast of the USS *Mohawk*.

Left: The *Mohawk* may have been down for less than a year but the marine growth is prolific.

submarines between 1942 and 1945, and rescued more than 300 torpedoed ship survivors. The *Mohawk* was the last ship to radio General Eisenhower a day before the Normandy landings to

confirm that the weather was clear enough to proceed.

Her final commission, lasting 30 years, saw her as a pilot-boat back on the Delaware. She spent her final years above water as a memorial museum in Key West, before lack of funds for renovation forced her to be scrapped.

The most honourable solution was to make the *Mohawk* the first military ship to be dedicated as a memorial to US veterans, thereby saving her from being cut up and sold as scrap metal.

So on 2 July, 2012, the "Mighty Mo" was laid to rest, sitting perfectly upright in 30m of water some 28 nautical miles west of Captiva Island.

THE WRECK HAD PLAYED HOST to an unusual art exhibition for a few months prior to my visit. Renowned underwater photographer Andreas Franke had dived the site and captured images before returning to his studio in Vienna.

There he superimposed onto them images of models in period clothing portraying the daily lives and dreams of home of the sailors and passengers.

The resulting 12 images were encased in steel-framed plexiglass and installed in the ship's inner spaces.

I met Andreas in Fort Myers the evening before his pictures were to be recovered from the wreck and placed in Lee County Alliance Arts Galleries, and he explained his mindset when undertaking the project.

I found the images quite moving, portraying the "Mighty Mo" in her underwater resting place, with peeling paint, rust, marine growth and fish life plus what appeared to be the ghosts of crew and visitors.

Franke had done the same thing on



the wrecks of the USS *General Hoyt S Vandenberg*, also in Florida, and the *Stavronikita* off Barbados.

The Hardcore crew arrived at the Tarpon Lodge boat dock to meet me at 6.30am. It would take three hours to reach Charlie's Reef, giving us plenty of time to get in the water before the planned recovery at 11.30.

My dive buddy would be instructor Denise Lawrence, a regular member of Corey's team. She had been diving these waters since she was a little girl.

Denise's enthusiasm was infectious. She had forgotten to bring her wetsuit and elected to dive the warm waters clad only in her bikini – brave, I thought, because the tides brought jellyfish with them at that time of year.

WE ARRIVED ON SITE and were greeted by the sight of a dozen or so other boats, all with the customary red and white "Diver Below" flags unfurled.

Bubbles breaking the surface indicated that a number of divers were in the water, and I could see some of Andreas's artwork already sitting on the deck on one of the boats.

The recovery had started earlier than planned, so we would miss seeing the artwork in situ. On the plus side, Denise and I would have the memorial wreck all to ourselves.

The descent line was choked with divers conducting safety stops. Andreas was there with the last of his pictures returning to the surface. A quick wave and we continued, past the crow's nest to the main deck.

The marine life was impressive, with huge shoals of tomtate and a few moon jellies engulfing the superstructure, obscuring our view initially, then



Above: Dolphins play in the wake of the boat in Pine Island Sound

Below: Fish shoal and moon jelly on the *Mohawk*.

politely moving *en masse* to let us pass through.

Finning to the stern past the bridge and stairways, Andreas's liquid history images of the captain and crew going about their business in the 1940s came to mind, and put a shudder up my spine.

The 50m-long wreck had been under water for a little over a year but was proving the ideal habitat for marine growth. Thousands of tiny tunicates interspersed with sponges, bryozoans and hydroids had made their homes there, giving a sprinkling of colour to the ship's dour rusting paint-job.

The visibility had suffered from the 40 or so divers who had just left the site,

and disturbed silt hung in the water like a cloud, making this dive feel like a standard UK Channel outing. I felt totally at home as we reeled off and meandered through the ship's interior.

BACK AT THE SURFACE, it was decided to dive the Boxcars some 200m from the *Mohawk*, also sunk deliberately as an artificial reef but very well established.

This time Corey joined me, complete with speargun and his wife Mirriah. The Boxcars were once piled up but years of immersion and decay through rusting had left only the reinforced frames and webbed corners with remnants of the steel cladding.

The skeletal remains were home to goliath grouper and masses of tomtate, occasional angelfish and barracuda and nurse sharks.

The steel structures were heavily encrusted in marine growth, a glimpse of what lay ahead for the *Mohawk*.

On our journey back in the boat, weaving through the antique fish-houses of Pine Island Sound, we were joined by a pod of dolphins, following in our wake and doing what dolphins do, leaping from the wave crests in twos and threes.

Our marine escorts put the finishing touch to a fantastic day's diving.

The Gulf Coast may not have the tropical reefs found elsewhere in Florida but Lee County Marine Division has ensured that the abundant sport-fishing grounds of Fort Myers and Sanibel have plenty to offer the travelling diver. ❑

FACTFILE

GETTING THERE ▶ BA flies from London Gatwick direct to Tampa International Airport, www.britishairways.com. Other airlines require a stopover at South-west Florida International Airport. Pre-booked car hire is available at all airports. A US Travellers Visa or an ESTA is required.

DIVING ▶ Hardcore Hook & Line Charters has nitrox available, www.hardcorehookandlinecharters.com

ACCOMMODATION ▶ Nigel Wade stayed at Tarpon Lodge Sportsman Inn on Pine Island, www.tarponlodge.com

WHEN TO GO ▶ Year-round but late summer can be wet and windy and severe weather is sometimes encountered.

MONEY ▶ US dollars, credit cards, gratuities are expected.

HEALTH ▶ Take a high-factor sunscreen all year and mosquito repellent in summer. Hyperbaric facilities can be found throughout Lee County.

PRICES ▶ Return flights from London to Tampa, £670. Pre-booked car hire is available at all airports from £150 for five days. Tarpon Lodge £101 per night. Two-dive charter with Hardcore, £92pp for up to six divers.

TOURIST INFORMATION ▶ www.lee-county.com, www.fortmyers-sanibel.com



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Can diving the wreck of a vessel that nearly killed you help bring you to terms with a tragedy?

STEVE WARREN

takes part in a diving project that might provide the answer

SURVIVOR

DREW SUTTON LEANS OVER THE BOW of the dredger looking down, camera poised to shoot. He has seen this bow once before, 20 years ago. He looked up at it then from the deck of a party boat full of bright young things.

Seconds later the party boat was sinking, ripped open and rolled over by this same dredger. For Drew Sutton was a passenger on the *Marchioness*, and now he lies atop the wreck of the *Bowbelle*, the ship that killed 51 people that dreadful night on the Thames in 1989. Drew is one of the survivors.

As the 20th anniversary of the sinking of the *Marchioness* loomed, Drew, a professional film-maker, felt compelled to visit the wreck of the *Bowbelle*.

It was not so much a pilgrimage as a confrontation. Drew intended to make a personal film about his experience.

It has taken me three more years to confront telling the story of the filming. It is really Drew's story and he has not

yet finished his film because, I believe, there are elements he does not, at this time, wish to revisit.

Drew and I are friends, and how could I report our trip objectively? How much of the emotions behind the scenes should I reveal? What should I leave out?

So I wrote clumsy introductions to half-started articles on our return from the wreck, and left them unfinished.

MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE FILM came by chance. I met Drew when he bought a camera housing from me. We were talking, and he mentioned the *Marchioness*. At first I heard without understanding. I had to ask him to repeat what he'd said.

Sometime later he unexpectedly asked me to join him as his assistant cameraman. I'm really a video hobbyist, and argued that he'd be better off working with a professional cameraman and that there would be no lack of takers, even though this is a speculative

venture. Costs and any income from the project, including this article, will be split equally among the team.

Drew countered that he was "comfortable with me". In the run-up to filming and later on location, I began to understand better Drew's reasoning.

Filming begins on the Thames. After the disaster the RNLI had been tasked with providing a rescue service on the river. JP Trenque, a top underwater photographer and a good friend, is a volunteer on the capital's lifeboats.

I introduce him to Drew, and he joins our team as stills photographer.

JP arranges for Drew and I to film along the river from the safety boat he crews. We don RNLI issue oversuits, life-jackets and helmets with intercoms before boarding the high-performance jetboat.

It's night as we speed towards the Houses of Parliament from the lifeboat station near Tower Pier. The tide is running fast, as it was on the

Photography by JP Trenque, Drew Sutton & Steve Warren



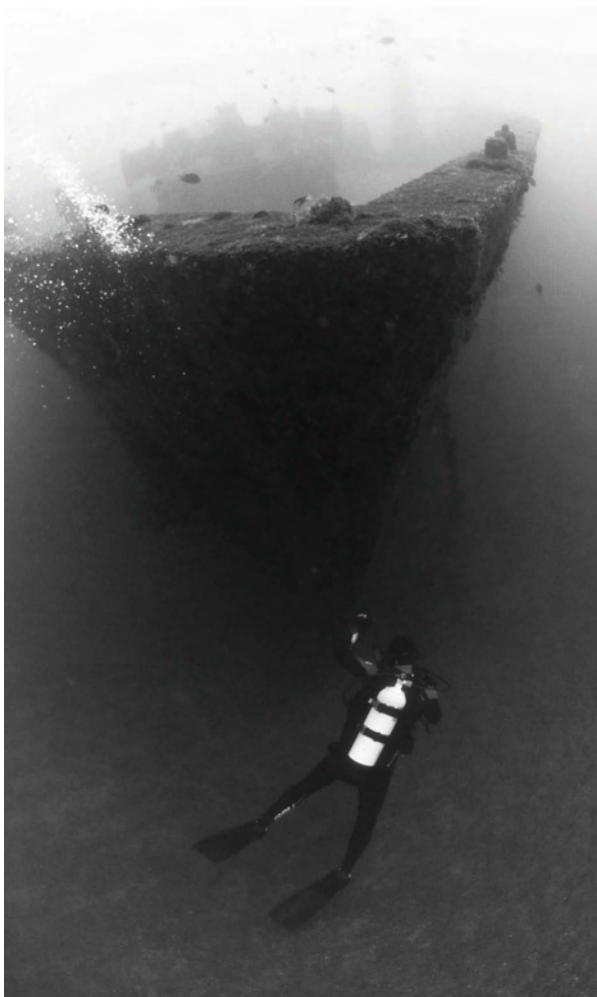
evening Drew was pitched into the blackness.

As the river hits the bridge supports, the accelerating water does not flow by or even angle gently. It literally falls.

I've jumped into some pretty fast-moving water, steering to catch the shotline in my hands and swinging around it with the current, but never without a BC and regulator and never, ever, at night. I try to envisage how out of control and afraid I would feel. I can't.

Above: Drew Sutton on the Thames, passing Big Ben.

Below: Drew swims around the bow of the *Bowbelle*.



THE MARCHIONESS WAS CLOSING

with Cannon Street Railway Bridge when the *Bowbelle* collided with her from astern. The flukes of the anchor suspended from the dredger's bow dug into the *Marchioness* and ripped through the saloon, condemning many to death as water flooded in, forcing victims into the vessel's companionways.

But it also opened an escape route for others. Who would survive now became a lottery. As the *Bowbelle* ploughed on she rolled the smaller vessel over, and the *Marchioness* sank in under a minute.

Drew fought himself free of the vessel, pulling his then-girlfriend clear as well.

At night the Thames cuts an ebony ribbon through the brightly lit banks of a city still wide awake. Drew recalls passengers on a Routemaster bus waving at the survivors caught in the current.

Drifting with the pair was another man. He sought safety by swimming for a garbage-catcher. Drew shouted not to, but he was ignored. The man drowned, taken underneath the raft by the tide.

Only about half the dead went down with the *Marchioness*. Getting out of the wreckage prolonged the lives of many of the survivors of the sinking only by minutes.

Drew struggled to keep his girlfriend and himself afloat. He saved both their lives, despite losing consciousness at some point. He recalls coming to when a policeman accidentally trod on his hand, after he had been recovered from the water and left for dead.

PERHAPS SURPRISINGLY, Drew took up diving after the disaster. He has an interest in an eco-dive centre in a remote part of Tanzania, which required a boat delivery along hundreds of kilometres of jagged coastline. He steered the 7m bow-rider at night, through mountainous seas that all but stood the boat on its stern. It didn't faze him.

His career as a professional underwater film-maker has also provided high-octane moments with sharks and, his specialist subject, the great whales. Drew is very comfortable around water.

He is a graceful man, educated and intelligent, an artist equally adept at composing a photograph or a music track for his films. Drew is modest about his charitable work for causes about which he is passionate. He has donated whale footage to conservation groups and records testimonies from victims of the Rwanda genocide.

No jobbing film-maker can afford to go completely under the radar, but he does not naturally put himself forward when, perhaps, he could. Drew is commercially aware, however, as his negotiations with the BBC for use of our underwater wreck footage indicates.

The 24m *Marchioness* was built in Oxford in 1923. She was pressed into service in WW2 as one of the famous Little Ships of Dunkirk and, later, as part of the Thames Hospital Emergency Transport Service.

In this role she would have ferried the City of London's injured along the river following bombings by the Luftwaffe.

In peacetime she was converted to a three-decked pleasure craft with bar and restaurant – as she was when hit by the *Bowbelle*.

The suction sand-dredger, launched from Troon in 1964, was nearly 80m long and dwarfed the *Marchioness*. After the collision the *Bowbelle's* Master did not stop, offer assistance or even put out a Mayday.

A year after the disaster, the *Bowbelle* was renamed the *Bom Rei* and sailed into service around the Atlantic island of Madeira. Here she dredged the shallow seabed for sand, until an accident with the dredge in heavy seas sank her during 1996. She came to rest in 32m

ON LOCATION IN MADEIRA we are quiet as our private hardboat steers a parallel course to the towering sea-cliffs that define the island and out to the dredging grounds. As the anchor is dropped over the wreck, we kit up in near-silence. What little talk there is seems restricted to the technicalities of how we will film the dive.

JP and I are both concerned about how Drew will cope with this first descent, adding to the task-loading of actually recording the dive, but we say nothing to him. I am first down, shooting up to catch the others as they sink hand over hand down the shotline towards the wreck.

I pan with Drew as he settles onto the side deck. He just kneels there. I know I should stop my camera and move to a new position, but I need to catch these first moments. The moment keeps

stretching. In the corner of my eye I see JP signal that he needs to move closer to take stills. As gently as I can, so as not to rock my camcorder, I take one hand off the grip and motion him in. I keep filming.

Eventually Drew moves off and I explore the vessel. For a ship that became so internationally notorious, it seems nondescript, a drab wreck.

Visibility is not great – perhaps sand has drifted in from nearby dredging, which Madeira uses for building materials, dulling the light.

Shooting point of views along the foredeck, I move through a shoal of fish but see little else. One of the factors that led to the collision was the *Bowbelle's* low command bridge. There was a blind spot leading from the wheelhouse for nearly a quarter-mile into the distance.

I enter the bridge and gaze out, trying – and failing – to imagine myself in command at the moment of impact.

Street and it would suddenly appear in front of me”.

Like other survivors, Drew went through years of therapy to help him come to terms with his experience. Did the sinking change him? “By 90%,” he replies.

I want to shoot inside the *Bowbelle*. I find a doorway and head inside, down a stairwell and past a mezzanine to reach the lower deck.

Silt has risen almost to porthole level as the *Bowbelle* has settled deep into the sand it once harvested. I enter a confined space, both intrigued and wary. I have no lights and no safety-line. This isn't smart.

I move very carefully ahead, checking behind regularly for the glow that leads back up the stairwell. I fear the consequences of a silt-out from one clumsy fin-kick, but am drawn in anyway.

Later, I tell Drew what I did. He chides me gently. Only after the trip do I begin to realise how unthinkingly callous I was, and

Below: Scratching the metal, the name *Bowbelle* can clearly be seen, even though the ship had been renamed *Bon Rei*.

time under water to repeat shots to make up for my inexperience and inability to “get it in one”, I expect to be routinely decompressing for 15-20 minutes on most dives. I have also planned to penetrate the hull, and before the trip had emailed the dive-centre owner about diving with independent singles, understood that this was OK and took my wing with me.

However, when I started to assemble my kit I was told in no uncertain terms that I could use only one cylinder.

My wing, which is not intended to hold a single, traps air and becomes unstable and hard to dump. I dive largely as originally intended, accepting eroded safety margins, but my camerawork suffers badly.

Ascending the stairwell with my camera running and held in both hands is an example. It's impossible to vent my BC without taking my hand off the housing and jarring the shot. I'm exhaling as much as I can in an effort to compensate for the expanding air in the wing, but ultimately rely on ending the sequence by headbutting the steel ceiling two decks up.

Even this jerks the camera, and after three or four takes I give it up.

Later some of this footage is used by the BBC – not to document the *Bowbelle*, but to represent the foundering *Marchioness*.

WE TAKE A DAY OFF to go tourist-diving. For some reason I'm last in, and snap my mask-strap as I prepare to jump. I curse my luck. Because of weight-saving, I have no diving spares as basic as a mask-strap. The boat-crew are already under water.

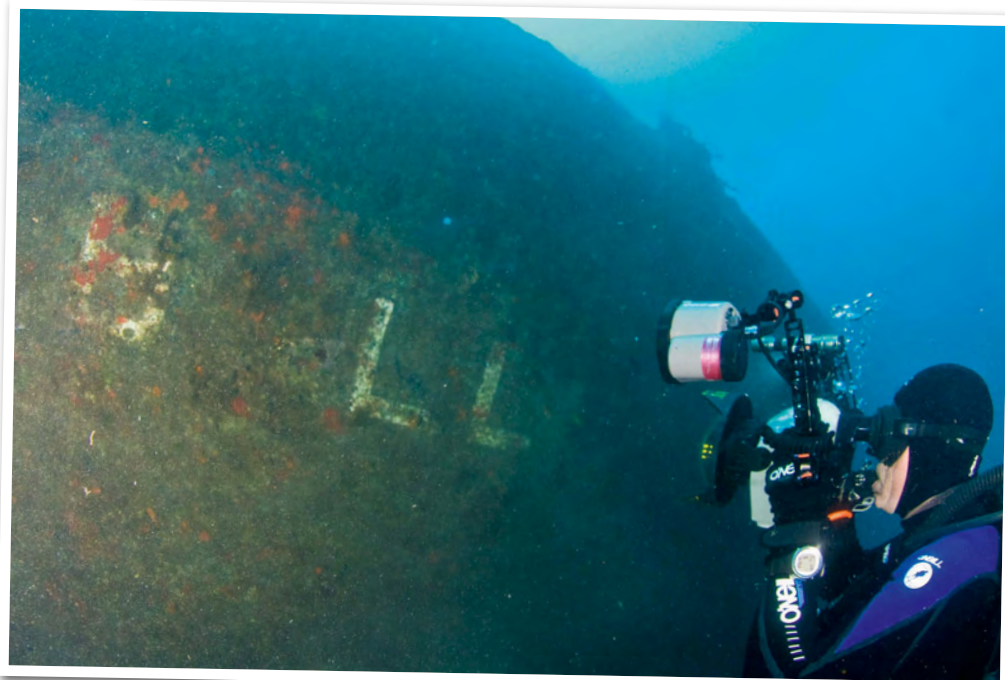
I dive anyway, keeping the mask in place alternately by inhaling or by holding onto it. I can still film. I'm experimenting with comms, and JP is on the Aga full-face mask. The signal is good enough for his French accent to come across clearly: “The mask is leaking. I am getting low on air.” With each transmission, he informs me that his air is getting lower.

So what? He has a five-point head-harness on his mask; I have no strap at all.

Drew films giant grouper. It's a pleasant diversion, and the trip has become a little lighter in mood. We're working well as a team, and our worries for Drew now seem misplaced. With shaven head and burly build our boat-driver looks like a B-movie henchman and takes to his nickname of Bond Villain 1 with good humour.

The aftermath of the disaster was peppered with recriminations. Hands were removed from 25 of the dead to help with identification.

To the professionals in charge of managing the first confused hours and days, identifying the dead quickly and informing relatives, lovers and friends of their loss was an overriding consideration. But to those bereaved, the act was seen as



Back on shore, I ask Drew if he wants to see my footage. He seems slightly uninterested, and I sense that he agrees only out of politeness. But once his eye is at the viewfinder he watches the entire side-deck sequence. Later he tells us that he was weeping under water.

OVER TIME, DREW DISCLOSES more information about the sinking. Some of it I decide never to discuss with anyone else. For a while I think what I learned might burden me, but instead I feel privileged and begin to understand how big an emotional leap Drew has made in choosing to take on the wreck.

“It became a living monster in my mind,” he explains. “Malevolent. I could be wide awake walking down Oxford

I regret it. I would never have entered the wreck had I not believed that I would get out, but no diver who dies lost inside an “easy” wreck ever thinks they won't leave it, except perhaps in the last moments as their air falters, then stops.

But for Drew, who saw people die in the river, another life lost to this cursed ship would haunt him.

My footage is poor, too. Underwater filming demands Zen-like buoyancy control. Sequences must be silky-smooth as the cameraman holds a shot, circles the subject or fins through a companionway.

Drew moves his camera through the water like a human Steadicam. I, to my shame, am having huge problems with stability.

Anticipating that I would need a lot of

desecration. That hands were misplaced and relatives not told of the amputations until after burials and cremations took place only added to their pain and outrage.

I have dived wrecks abroad on which people have died more recently than on the *Marchioness* with little thought for the feelings of surviving relatives.

Had the *Marchioness* remained on the bottom and been diveable, would British divers consider it fair game for pleasure-diving, souvenir-hunting and photo-opportunities?

Yet overseas we seem able to dismiss the sensitivities of others as we pay to explore and enjoy their loved one's graves. The issues raised cause me to question my own morals, and I'm disturbed by what I learn about myself.

We're outside HSE jurisdiction and on one dive the plan goes like this: "JP, where are you diving?"

"Midships".

"Drew?"

"Stern."

"I'll go to the bow, then". Often we'd find each other decompressing on the anchorline, having gone our separate ways on reaching the wreck.

I'm very comfortable with solo-diving, though I miss those independent singles. Another diver often gets in the way of film-making and photography, and by diving apart we can work more efficiently, covering separate areas, each shooting different footage or stills images.

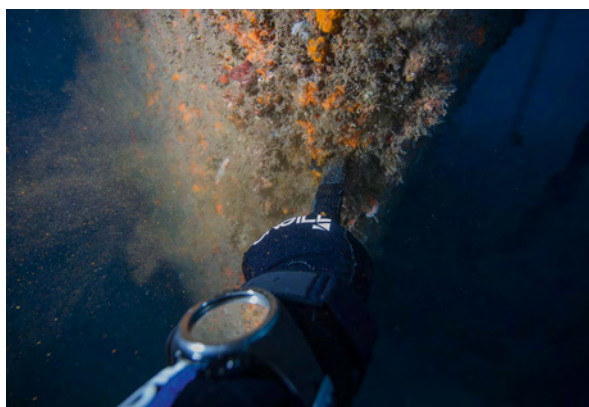
But this can backfire, and it does on me. I pass Drew scratching with his bare fingers at the paint on the side of the shipwreck, but think nothing of it. Years under water has left the name *Bom Rei* faded but readable. Drew is trying to uncover the ship's previous name, the one by which she is known the world over.

As flecks of disturbed paint catch the current, the letters begin to take form: *Bowbelle*.

But by then I was filming something else, and the moment is lost forever. It would have been incredibly poignant.

THE FILM-CREW commissioned by the BBC is set to join us for the last day of filming. Love Productions specialises in intimate documentaries that reveal the human condition.

For *Marchioness: A Survivor's Story*, director Leo Burley is following the man who organised the party aboard the *Marchioness*, who must now, as a survivor, live with the consequences of the tragedy – fashion agent and TV presenter Jonathan Phang. Jonathan is talking to other survivors about their memories and the aftermath, and asking the most revealing and difficult of questions: do they blame him? Many



Above: These two photographs were taken by Drew Sutton when he dived the *Bowbelle*. The top one he calls *In Memoriam*: "Where I put personal effects of remembrance and wondered how things would be different if there had been a watch", and the other *If I Had The Strength*: "Touching the 'blade' that changed my life and so many others'."

Below right: *Marchioness* disaster survivors Drew Sutton (right) and Jonathan Phang moored over the wreck of the *Bowbelle*.

are people he has not seen in years.

Drew is one of these. Another day's diving over, we sit in a café overlooking the hotel entrance. Drew expertly rolls cigarettes. Usually a light smoker, tonight he chain-smokes as we await the film-crew, talkative and restless.

A taxi pulls up. People get out, then back in. Then out again. The film unit are taping their own arrival. We call them over. Jonathan and Drew embrace. It's going to be OK.



Jonathan has not been on a boat since the sinking. Unfortunately the hotel has removed the quayside ladder for cleaning. A big man, he has to jump onto the dive-boat, then tolerate being driven in circles so that the film-crew can show him departing before the boat returns to the quayside so that they can board.

Jonathan and Drew discuss their memories of the wrecking and the aftermath and the feelings they have 20 years on.

Both are media-savvy, and understand how to deliver soundbites that convey the horror of their shared experience in as few words as possible.

They also understand the technical side of film-making. When a nearby dredger drowns out the conversation, they stop and then, minutes later, pick up exactly where they left off, emotions as fresh and raw as they were before.

And this trip is all about emotions. After that first dive we had not talked much on the returning boat.

Wandering into the changing room back at the centre I find Drew. "I think you handled yourself with great dignity, Drew," I said vacuously.

Wearing only his towel, Drew grabbed me in a bear-hug, and I don't think we exchanged any further words.

WITH LOVE PRODUCTIONS' camera trained on Drew and JP, we make our last dive to the *Bowbelle*. JP hangs a safety tank over the side, which we had only now thought of doing, and gives a very thorough safety briefing, which we hadn't bothered with before. All of that hits the cutting-room floor.

JP dives first to rig a closed-circuit fishing camera through which Jonathan can see the wreck live. We shoot our last video footage and take our final photographs. And then it's all over.

Has diving the shipwreck been cathartic for Drew? I don't know. But he tells me: "It's good to see it on the seabed. It's as if it has been killed and it is no longer dangerous."

"I would like to think that people will respect and remember everyone who was on board the *Marchioness* – those who lost their lives that evening, but also the other survivors."

"Some people have not fully recovered from the trauma, and this issue is not fully resolved to this day."

As we sit in a kerbside restaurant on our last evening together, a car turns onto the drag, stereo blaring.

In a real *Outer Limits* moment, a Madonna track fills the night. Drew is engrossed in conversation, and I don't think the tune registers with him. But as I look at the survivor, it does with me. It's *Die Another Day*.



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CHINA BLACK



As leading cave-divers are invited to the opening of a unique dive-centre in China, MARTYN FARR enjoys a taste of celebrity lifestyle and explores depths that the authorities hope will attract others to follow in his wake



DAXING SPRING LIES IN a beautiful setting. Just metres from a road, it affords easy access to the water.

The surface lake is more than 100m long and perhaps 30m wide, and in this expanse of sub-tropical 21-22°C water three or more openings lead down into the murky depths.

Between these holes the water is generally more than 10m deep, with sheer rocky sides and a sandy bottom. Despite the milky tinge to the water daylight reaches the floor here, so no light is required.

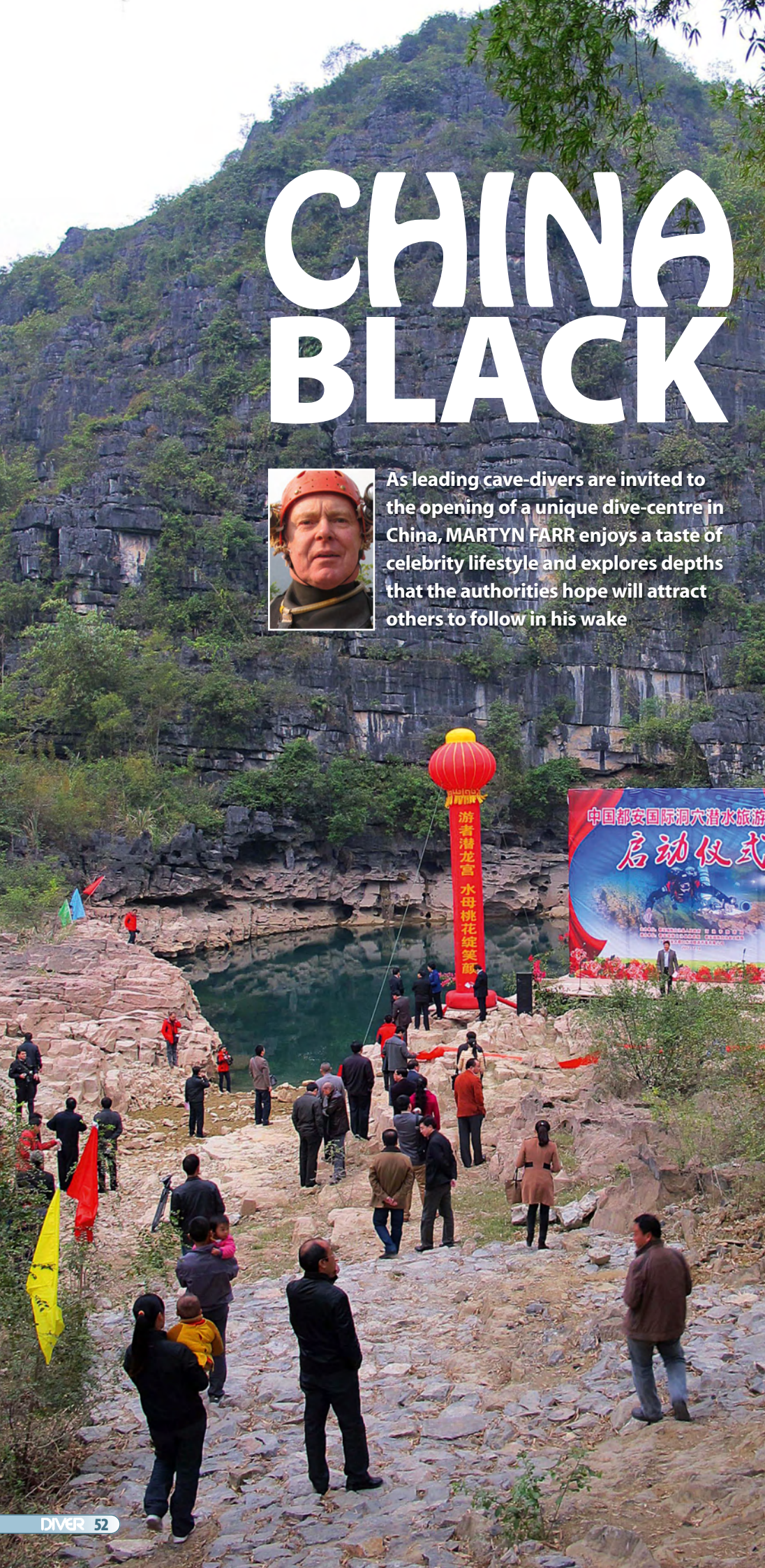
Our Chinese friends busy themselves practising a variety of in-water skills. Visibility in this daylight zone feels like 6m, but as I drop between the narrowing walls of a steeply descending tunnel I feel the need to turn my head-light on.

Suddenly, with backscatter, visibility is reduced to about 4m. The place feels oppressive. A thin technical line, slightly discoloured after many months' immersion, gives me something on which to keep a very close eye.

I make a slow controlled descent to about 40m, gaining the impression that down here the place is big. There are dark voids all around, and losing the line would be more than embarrassing.

After cruising around the lake and probing various holes for more than an hour, I get the feeling that down in these depths is a veritable labyrinth to be explored. This is not an area of big clearwater tunnels like Florida – this is a more serious kettle of fish.

When I had stepped off the plane





I had still been wondering if this was all too good to be true. My all-expenses-paid trip to China had been arranged by email by people I had yet to meet, and details remained sketchy.

I was alone in Nanning Airport in the south-eastern Guangxi province, an area I hadn't visited for 28 years, and was feeling slightly nervous.

Left: Jellyfish Hole, site of the initial dive-centre opening ceremony.

Above: Show time!

Below: Harry Harris explores Daxing Cave.

anxieties had melted away as I was ushered to the bar to meet a small group of fellow-invitees. I recognised Curt Bowen, one of the leading technical divers in the USA – we had met a few weeks earlier at a dive conference in Antwerp.

The other two were French. I didn't know Sebastian Lissarrague, who had initiated the current round of exploratory cave-diving activities in Du'an, but his companion I knew by reputation.

Pascal Bernabe is a highly accomplished cave-diver, although his most audacious undertaking was a 2008 world depth record dive of 330m, carried out on open circuit off Corsica.

There were eight guests in total. The appointed organiser of the event, Pierre Deseigne, was already in Du'an along with the Australian Richard

"Harry" Harris and film-maker Nathalie Lasselin from Canada. A leading technical diver from Finland, Mia Pietikainen, was on her way.

Clearly I would be rubbing shoulders with some of the world's most experienced technical-diving practitioners – this should be one hell of a week.

I HAD NOT VISITED THE CITY of Du'an before, but in 1985 I spent the best part of a month in the limestone country 170 miles to the north-east, based at Guilin. This whole area, stretching down towards the Vietnamese border, is renowned for its "cone karst", spectacular pyramidal towers of limestone that extend as far as the eye can see and beyond.

This is the world's largest single karst region. The towers and cones are the backdrop for so much traditional Chinese painting that inevitably the area features large on the tourist itinerary. I had never seen anything quite like this scenery, before or since.

Back in the early 1980s the Chinese were keen to establish positive international relations and, given Western expertise in all aspects of cave-exploration and scientific study, had invited a British team to help progress their fledgling skills in this field.

As such, 1985's had been a landmark expedition, with more than 18 miles of passage surveyed in a number of different caves. I had carried out the very first cave-diving operation in China, when we tackled the terminal downstream sump in the headwaters

I had been invited to participate in the opening of a new dive-centre that was almost certainly the first of its kind in China, located in the neighbouring city of Du'an.

An attractive young lady had walked over to greet me, and my



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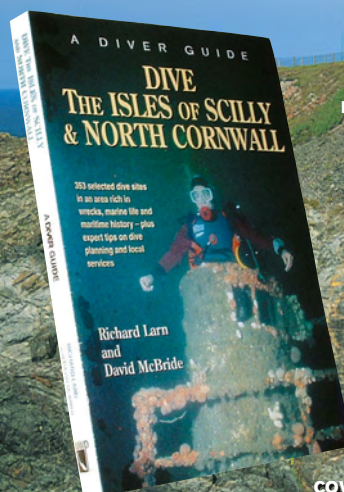
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of the lengthy Guan Yan system.

Despite the limitations of the equipment available at the time, an impressive clean-washed 30m-dee tunnel was successfully passed to reveal a short dry continuation beyond. History had been made.

Two years later, another British team had visited the flooded caves near Du'an. Their dives established that the sites were plentiful, very big and deep.

A number of places were dived to 70m depth on air, but it was clear that continued exploration would need to wait until technology advanced.

The years had passed. It was not until 2010 that a Frenchman, Jean Botazzi, persuaded a group of his countrymen to mount an expedition.

Two trips resulted, and in 2012 lead-diver Pierre Deseigne established a Chinese depth record with a descent to 121m in Daxing Spring.

The Chinese had by now roughly established the extent of the huge flooded underground network. They also realised that diving itself would prove a tourist attraction, especially among the technical fraternity.

A project was launched to capitalise on the unique features of the area. It would be designated a "Geopark", with a dive-centre set up in the city to cater for divers from around the world.

It was a two-hour journey from the airport to Du'an. As we arrived work was still frantically underway to set the final touches to the dive-centre, and we learned that the opening ceremony was scheduled for the end of the week.

The all-important diving equipment was ready and waiting; facilities for gas-filling were set up. The hotel was fabulous, the food excellent and we were treated like royalty. We had decent vehicles and drivers to get to the dive-sites and translators to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

The authorities were determined to create the right impression.

DIVING HAD BEGUN THE DAY after our arrival as, together with some Chinese divers and an unprecedented entourage of photographers and journalists, we had paid that first visit to Daxing Spring.

We couldn't all dive the same cave at the same time, so day two saw the emergence of two teams.

I accompany Harry Harris and film-maker Nathalie to Lie Nei Cave. Harry is weeks away from a major expedition to the Pearce Resurgence in South Island, New Zealand.

The Pearce, with 6° water, strong flow and current depth of 220m, is serious – Harry is clearly at the top of his game.



Lie Nei Cave is a discreet site at the edge of a small village, overshadowed by a huge, well-vegetated tower of limestone. A flight of stone steps leads down into the water and the pathway can be seen leading away into the depths.

Low crags surround the small pool, and a host of young children quickly take up position, curious as to what we strange people are up to. Everywhere we go during the week journalists, photographers and film-crews appear, while the local inhabitants are clearly bemused by the strange activity.

Lie Nei is very different from the spacious Daxing, but it is soon apparent that the visibility is much the same – about 4m.

Harry dons his rebreather and, after posing briefly for the inevitable photocalls above and then below water, disappears into a descending tunnel.

Top: Nathalie filming in Lie Nei.

Above: Martyn Farr meets the locals at Daxing Spring.

Below: The international dive team pose with their hosts on the final day – in the back row from left: Sebastian Lissarrague; Pierre Deseigne; Harry Harris; Jean Botazzi; Martyn Farr; Curt Bowen, Mia Pietikainen, Pascal Bernabe and Nathalie Lasselin.





The stone steps finish at a depth of 6m, so clearly this is the level to which the water falls in the dry season.

We follow a comfortably large tunnel for a short distance before the floor falls away, lost to view. Below 15m depth the line clings somewhat precariously against the cave roof, which angles down ever more steeply.

Diving open-circuit, it is evident that silt is being displaced. Photography is not easy under these conditions, and with Harry still exploring somewhere far below, Nathalie and I retire back to the shallows. In the event, Harry's two-and-a-half-hour solo dive takes him down to 107m depth, leaving the cave wide open.

IT'S DAY THREE, and we're at Tun Lei, a remote site deep in the cone karst. The hole itself is impossible to access without a ladder, as it is ringed with sheer-sided and undercut rock faces.

Our hosts come up with a rigid 4m-long bamboo structure and some rope. Equipment is then lowered and we kit up while floating over the relatively clear, deep water. This place has a lovely feel, but life would be a lot easier if some form of floating platform was installed.

Visibility is of the order of 6m or more, a pleasant change from the other sites we have seen. Below the surface, a slope of rocks and debris leads steeply into the

depths. Tun Lie is evidently a huge chamber under water, perhaps 40m or more across.

At about 40m depth the walls funnel in and a narrowing passage just a few metres wide leads steeply down to a terminus at 67m depth. This fine dive is the only one we do that leads to an "end". Presumably the visibility is better here, because the site does not sit on an active flow of water.

The other team is also showing its colours. Its leader Pascal, diving open-circuit while his buddy Mia uses a rebreather, returns to Daxing and descends to 130m depth.

In the following days deep dives are also undertaken at Jellyfish Cave. On one of these a French trimix bottle, lost two years previously, is recovered from 100m depth.

This site is the location for Du'an Dive Centre's grand opening ceremony. There are four separate holes there, all seemingly in excess of 100m deep (some holes in the area have been plumbed to depths in excess of 150m).

This is a vast area of subterranean drainage, and the scores of cave-diving sites identified to date are in reality "windows" to far deeper active conduits, providing generations of explorers with years of exciting exploration.

Finding those tunnels and following them is, however, going to be



Above left: The Red River.

Above: A karst window.

Below: Celebrating the end of a successful week.

challenging. We know that flowing water that makes a brief appearance at the surface at Daxing Spring finally enters the Red River 22 miles distant.

NONE OF US WILL EVER forget the day of the ceremony. Jellyfish Hole provides a spectacular setting as hundreds of people turn up to listen to the speeches and savour the moment. I act as delegate for the international diving group.


The formalities are followed by a lavish display of Chinese tradition and spectacular fireworks before we return to the city for a second round of festivities.

The invited divers give individual talks in the afternoon, and the day reaches a climax with a show in the city square, where thousands of people form an audience primed for our arrival.

We are feted like celebrities, and are later invited onstage to have our photographs taken with the performers.

From the scale of the week-long exercise, it's clear that the Chinese recognise that they have something very special at Du'an.

The Guangxi Du'an Underground River National Geopark has received national recognition, and in two years' time the hope is that the designation will be international.

The pace of development throughout China is rapid, nowhere more so than Du'an. We eight divers were lucky to have been invited at the outset of this project, but it will be Chinese divers who take up the gauntlet of exploration. 

* Martyn Farr offers training courses and guiding opportunities for cavern- and cave-diving – see www.farrworld.co.uk



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BE THE CHAMP!



It's a tiny creature, but the subject of capturing the pygmy seahorse to best effect in photographs calls for a two-part approach from **ALEX MUSTARD**. This month he sets out the basics, one of which is that there is...

'More to a good shot than magnification'

CAN CLEARLY REMEMBER when the first photos of pygmy seahorses hit the scene. It was the late 1990s, and in all my years in underwater photography I can't recall there ever being so much excitement about a subject.

Underwater photographers instantly fell in love with these tiny creatures, full of charisma and perfectly adapted to their seafan homes.

It is a love affair that endures to this day. As a result, I plan to dedicate both this and next month's columns to photographing these tiny favourites.

Pygmy photos existed before the late 1990s, but it was only when the eagle-eyed dive-guides of the Lembeh Strait had figured out how to find them reliably that most underwater photographers had the chance to add them to their portfolio.

Soon pygmies were found in many other locations and more species were added to the roster.

By the early 2000s, pygmy shots were so widespread that my buddy Peter Rowlands coined the phrase "pygmy

seahorse fatigue" when judging photo contests. They are visually stunning, but at times can make the most unco-operative subjects, making the challenge of getting good shots something of a rite of passage for aspiring underwater photographers.

This is definitely a part of their enduring appeal!

The emphasis soon shifted to creating fresh images of pygmies. Ten years ago this month, I shot my well-known dancing pygmy seahorse composite as my attempt of a new interpretation. Underwater photographers also chased ever-higher magnifications. Pygmies are difficult to find with your eyes, let alone looking through a high-magnification macro lens.

The pursuit of ever-bigger pygmies in the frame was driven by bragging rights, rather than stronger images.

Since then things have calmed down, and most photographers have realised that there is much more to a good pygmy shot than magnification.

I want to get into detail on these diminutive darlings.

Below: The visual story of a pygmy seahorse is that it is small and perfectly adapted to its habitat. Completely filling the frame with the subject is not the best way to communicate these qualities.

Denise's pygmy seahorse in Raja Ampat, taken with Nikon D7100 and Nikon 105mm. Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. ISO 125, 1/250th @ f/2.5.

PYGMY SEAHORSES DIFFER from standard seahorses not only by being tiny, but also in the details of their bodies. Unlike their full-sized relatives, male pygmies don't have a brood pouch on the front of their tail, and instead brood their young in a cavity within their main body, which is why they look so inflated when pregnant.

Also, pygmies have only a single gill opening at the back of their head, rather than one on each side as normal seahorses have.

Quite how many true species of pygmy seahorses there are is debatable.

There are three common types in the tropical Indo-Pacific, two that live on seafans (Bargibant's and Denise's) and the Pontoh's type pygmy, which lives on small hydroids and algae growing on the reef. The Pontoh's type was split into four species in 2008, but they may actually all be the same.

Gilbert Whitley described the first species, which was discovered by his colleague George Bargibant while studying seafans in the 1960s.

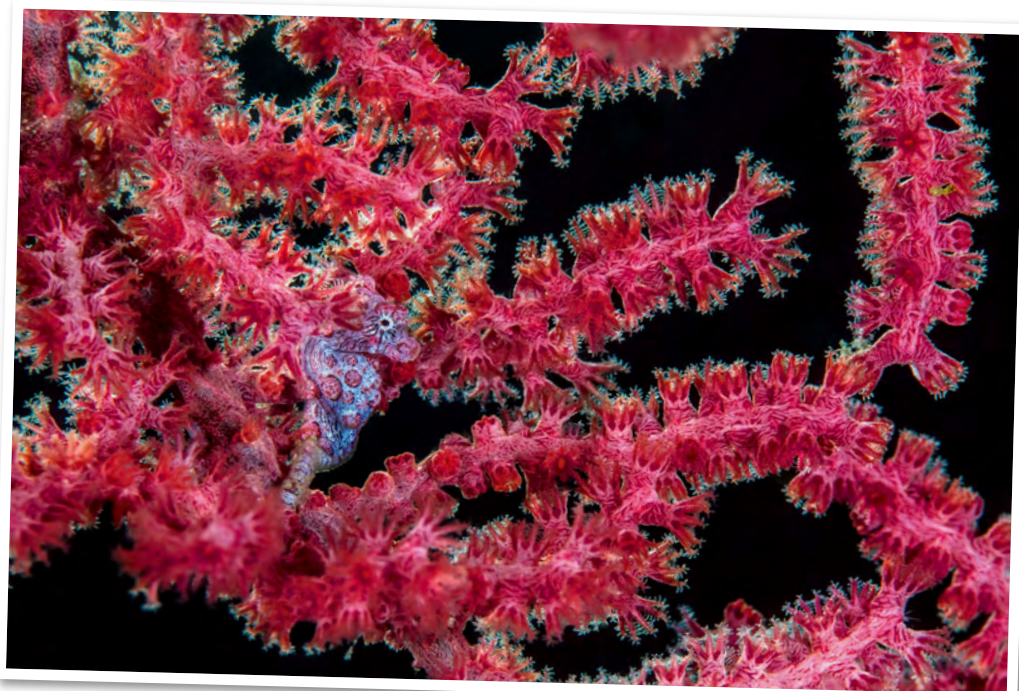
The rest have been found since 2000 by underwater photographers or dive guides and named after them. There is a good chance that more species may be found in the next few years, perhaps on a trip you are on...

WINNING UNDERWATER shots of any subject usually start with good pre-dive planning. Our first consideration should be equipment. Although pygmies are small, they are not the smallest

STARTER TIP

Despite many underwater photographers liking to prove their skills by shooting pygmy seahorses with as much magnification as possible, the best photos often have pygmies relatively small in the frame.

Giving them space emphasises their diminutive size and their adaptation to their habitat.





Pictured: Seafans don't always have their polyps out, but when they do we should make sure we incorporate them in our photos.

Bargibant's pygmy seahorse in Lembeh, taken with Nikon D4, Nikon 105mm and Subsee +5. Subal housing and three Inon Z240 strobes (one off camera behind fan). ISO 200, 1/250th @ f/32.



subjects we shoot, and because they are often found on pleasing backgrounds they do not necessarily call for really extreme super macro.

The visual story that makes photos of pygmies so compelling is of a tiny, cute critter that is perfectly adapted to its home. The best images should push many, if not all, of these buttons.

As such, pygmies are well-suited to being shot relatively small in the frame. These are usually more powerful images than the willy-waving maximum magnification shots.

Therefore, on a mirrorless or crop-sensor SLR standard macro lenses without accessories will often produce the perfect pygmy shots of a seahorse in its habitat. If you've never shot pygmies before, this is definitely the way to start.

If we want more magnification we should consider adding a teleconverter, rather than a dioptre. This maintains our working distance from the subject and reduces the risk of us bumping into the fan with the front of the lens and making all the pretty polyps close up.

MID-WATER TIP

Try to frame the seafan background so that it would be an attractive composition even if there wasn't a pygmy in the frame. Don't place the pygmy in the centre of the frame, but towards one side, ideally on a third, facing towards the middle.

Above: Behaviour, such as this synchronised courtship dance of a male and female, will always elevate a pygmy shot, not least because it shows that you were taking the photos without stressing the subjects.

Pontoh's pygmy seahorse in Lembah, taken with Nikon D4, Nikon 105mm and Subsee +5. Subal housing and Inon Z240 strobes. ISO 200, 1/250th @ f/29.

For extreme supermacro, a combination of teleconverter and dioptre will give very strong magnification without being right on top of the subject, and will increase our chance of getting an image with strong eye contact.

PYGMIES ARE FOUND in many destinations across the tropical Indo-Pacific, but it makes sense to focus on them in locations where they are abundant. Dive sites that have just a single fan with pygmies, down deeper than 25m, on a vertical wall, are less likely to yield great shots.

While Constantinos Petrinou's seminal book on Lembah named it the *Realm Of The Pygmy Seahorse*, the best location I know is Raja Ampat.

Raja has many, many dive sites with pygmies and most have numerous fans with numerous pygmies. I have often had "one-minute-pygmies" here, where the guides have found the first one during the first minute of the dive.

Shaded beneath the undercuts of the island, seafans grow so shallow that they are exposed by the lowest tides and we can even get "safety-stop pygmies".

My photo of a Denise's pygmy in the Raja Ampat Marine Protected Area was taken at just 6m depth.

Raja Ampat even has sites where I have completed the "holy trinity" of the three main pygmy species in a single

ADVANCED TIP


Pygmy seahorses may be relatively rare in the oceans, but photographs of them are common. Winning pygmy shots need something extra.

Try long exposures to burn in a blue background, backlighting with a remote strobe, or capturing some natural behaviour, such as swimming or courtship between individuals.

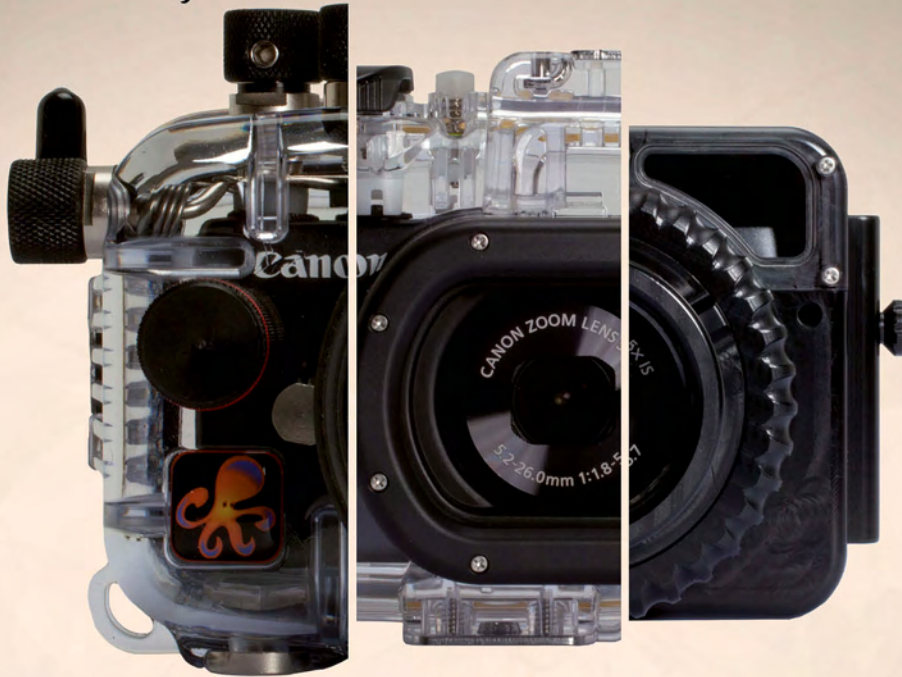
dive. Although as a general rule, Misool area is best for the seafan species (Denise's and Bargibant's) and Dampier is best for the Pontoh's.

Also, as most of these dive-sites are fantastic for wide-angle, many photographers will not be chasing macro subjects. This minimises the risk of "pygmy-rage", where one photographer incurs the wrath of the group by hogging the seahorse, and gives us the chance to spend quality time with these subjects.

Those that caught my presentation with Martin Edge at the Dive Show in October will know the importance of correctly investing our precious dive time in the right subjects.

This is especially true of pygmies, and next month I will get into detail of how to make the most of our underwater time to get those winning images. 

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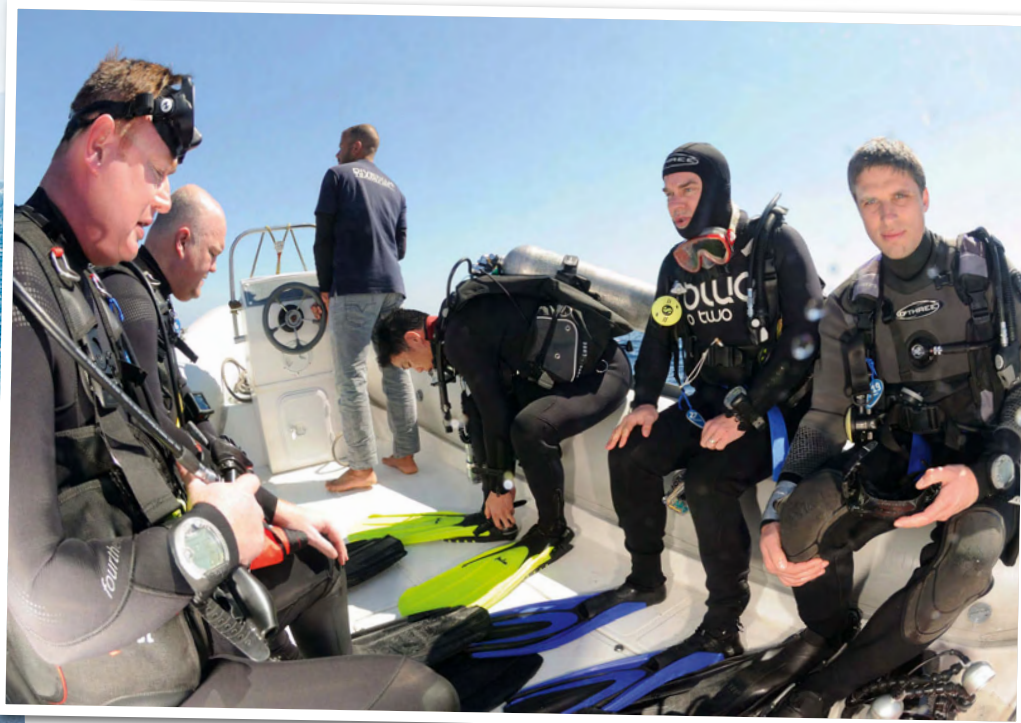
A liveaboard trip is quite an intense experience, however, and can take us by surprise.

I remember my first Red Sea trip more than 10 years ago. I had some amazing experiences, but I was knackered by the end of it – and I was fit in those days.

Flying, getting up earlier than normal, kitting up and diving four times a day, loading up on nitrogen and possibly being more physically active than usual can leave us massaging sore muscles and feeling in need of another holiday.

We spend a lot of time and money maintaining our kit and ensuring that it is rigged to our advantage, lightweight for travelling, streamlined for ease of finning and set up to make comfort, safety and enjoyment our priorities. Do we prepare the most important component with the same meticulous care?

Listening to a set of middle-aged and largely unfit divers kitting up on a dive-deck can be hilarious – a soft chorus of groans, sighs and strangely functional noises



that accompany our squeezing into neoprene. More sounds of protest, knee-cracks and discs slipping will accompany standing up with lead in the BC, bending over to attach fins, stretch-grunting to grab torches and so forth. I'm reminded of a seal colony.

The thin, lithe and honed among the group will have slipped their 3kg into each of their integrated-weight pockets and be bouncing up and down on the dive-deck while the rest of us do that half hula-hoop action and swing 12kg of weights around our ample frames. Handing those up to the boat-crew won't be fun.

Getting fit

The first thing we think about when we decide to "keep fit" is weight. Most of us want to lose some, but the uncomfortable truth is that the best way to do this is to consume less calorie-rich and processed food and eat more fresh fruit and

vegetables. The fads and extreme diets don't work for most people, who either lose muscle-mass or end up larger than when they started.

If you want to have fewer unsightly neoprene bulges, lay off the chocolate and pies for a month or two before the trip. It might save you the cost of a new wetsuit or a hernia as you strain to get into a suit that has "shrunk over the winter".

Losing body mass has plenty of benefits for the diver. Fat is quite a bulky substance, and for every given amount of body fat you carry around you need to compensate with lead.

We learn this early on in our training, but did you know that muscle is much denser than fat? A kilo of fat displaces more water than a kilo of muscle, so if we can reduce our body fat and perhaps turn those extra calories into muscle, we can reduce the amount of lead we need to carry and reduce the groaning involved as we waddle down to the dive-deck.

Being lighter also means that we reduce the strain on knees and backs but, perhaps more importantly, we also find it far easier to move through the water.

We use less energy to shift our own mass and that of the water we need to push out of the way.

Because we float and can hang neutral in the water, we forget that we still possess mass. As Newton observed with his equation $\text{force} = \text{mass} \times \text{acceleration}$, we and our aching muscles must provide the force to move that mass, and with less body mass and lead to carry we can travel further for less effort.

Doesn't that sound attractive?

I won't be running any marathons in preparation for diving – my knees are knackered enough.

If you do join the gym or run 10k every evening, good luck to you, but for most of us it's enough to start by walking or cycling more, using stairs instead of lifts and so on.

Perhaps the prospect of a great dive trip is sufficient incentive to do an hour or two's more exercise over the week.

You can undo all your good work over the course of the trip, as the food flows freely and regularly.

Nicotine

I used to smoke, and to enjoy it. I especially loved dekitting after a dive, reaching for my cigarettes and sitting on the sun-deck filling out my log-book, coffee and smoke to hand.

It was heaven, but that was the chemicals talking. That was just one of several substances for which I paid good money to delude my poor animal brain.

When I finally gave up I expected my air consumption to drop, but to my annoyance, and after several minutes of being really bad at mental arithmetic, I was very disappointed.

In fact I later realised that I had started carrying a much larger camera just as I gave up smoking. My diving style had consequently changed, which may have offset the gains, so it wasn't as bad as I had feared.

The evidence and the science are unequivocal – smoking degrades your lung performance. This occurs mainly because of a reduction in oxygen exchange caused by increasing the amount of carbon monoxide in your blood.

Carbon monoxide bonds to haemoglobin (the oxygen-carrying molecule in your red blood cells) far more easily than oxygen does, so your muscles receive less oxygen and you need to breathe harder.

Smokers' bodies react by producing more red blood cells, which increases blood viscosity. This makes the blood





harder to pump and makes gas exchange within fine capillaries less efficient.

Nicotine itself increases both your heart rate and the ease with which blood clots can form. Circulation to the extremities is reduced due to vaso-constriction, which can lead to cramping.

Simply put, nicotine significantly increases the risk of death from cardiovascular illnesses, often quoted as a factor in diving-related deaths.

If you fancy giving up, make sure you try to do this well before you travel. Nicotine withdrawal can affect your mental functioning and cause poor reasoning and confusion. The last thing you need is to be fed-up on board and annoying your fellow-guests with your cravings – especially me!

The biology of smoking's effect on the body is quite complicated, and there are other chemicals such as hydrogen cyanide in cigarette smoke that are very, very toxic.

However, switching to smoking withdrawal aids isn't necessarily the answer. Nicotine has profound physiological effects and potentially increasing your nicotine intake through patches, guns, sprays and e-cigarettes can be dangerous too.

I wish dive-boats would ban smoking in all public areas. If someone said that they were happy to dive on a regulator that gave them less gas than they could get, we'd ask questions.

We spend money on regs that provide the best ease of inhalation, so why not treat our lungs with the same consideration, and save money in the process?

Alcohol

I was at a UK quarry site not too long ago, chatting to some divers who were travelling out to Sharm for a liveaboard trip. They were bragging about how much they were planning to drink.

I mentioned that I'm a bit of a lightweight and usually went to bed early, and was told that "dive trips are all about drinking with the lads", or something similar.

My sanity and overall status as a diver was diminished in their eyes, no doubt.

By all means drink alcohol, but not every night, and certainly not on the first night. You'll be tired, dehydrated and will no doubt make a dick of yourself. I'd suggest having dinner and going to bed if you want to get the best out of the week.



Alcohol is also a high-calorie molecule, and if you're wanting to lose weight, cutting down can be a valuable tactic.

For me, however, the biggest concern is divers who are still technically drunk and diving the morning after. Have they kitted up correctly, were they paying attention during the buddy check, and what is happening in their addled heads?

We're all going to sit in the sun and enjoy the view and relish the moment as we lift the first drink of the trip to our lips – wonderful. But remember, alcohol in excess can increase your susceptibility to cold due to vaso-dilation.

It can reduce your blood-sugar level, leading to tiredness and increased chances of dehydration.

Is that night of booze that may ruin your diving the next day worth it? Save it for the last night would be my advice.

Sleep

I get so excited before a trip that I don't always sleep the night before my flight. It's daft really, a middle-aged man acting like a kid, but that's what liveaboard trips can do for you.

Sleep is vital for a happy liveaboard holiday. If you arrive tired and you've

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shifted time-zones you could well be awake for 24 hours or more, leaving you in sleep-deficit for the duration of your stay. If you're tired, are you really listening to the dive briefing and checking your kit correctly?

Fortunately, sleep is easily come by during the day. Seasoned divers will tell you that when the ship's bell rings, you check your hair. If it's dry you dive, if it's wet you eat. In between – you sleep!

Caffeine really affects me. Not only is it a diuretic that can increase dehydration, but it can scupper a night's sleep.

Liveboards tend not to have decaffeinated beverages, so lay off the coffee and tea or take your own decaff.

Fortunately it's a myth that international drug-smugglers pack their stock in coffee to fool sniffer dogs, so the Customs people won't be any more interested in you than normal, and the rubber gloves may not be needed.

Creakin' joints

I've read a few articles now suggesting that divers try to increase their flexibility and core strength and reduce their risk of muscle damage by having a crack at yoga, pilates or so forth.

I used to consider this a bit silly, but now consider a good series of stretches before a dive a great idea if, like me, you get a bit creaky. Slip into the habit of stretching before travelling and you will feel the better for it.

Instructions for basic yoga and pilates moves can be found online, but don't overdo it. What you're looking to do is to stretch gently and increase the flexibility of your joints and the elasticity of your tendons.

If you have any medical issues that limit your ability to undertake such activity, you should consult a professional first.

It takes only a few minutes to do a Full Sun Salutation, a simple series of stretches, moves and breathing that will help with complaining backs and, if repeated a few times a day, may save you from diving with a pulled muscle.

It's far more acceptable to do this sort of thing on the deck these days. Just say it's an old war wound or you did it wrestling bears or something rugged.

Being prepared

I have from time to time been buddied up with folks who shouldn't have been allowed in the water, people who for whatever reason might not have been able to get much diving done and have forgotten most of what they learned.

Most training agencies recommend that if you haven't dived for a certain period of time – say, six months – you should



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undertake a refresher.

If you're an old salt whose first reg was a baccy tin and you're onto your 1000th dive, your need for a refresher is arguably low, but if you finished your Open Water a year ago on holiday and haven't dived since, should you really be in the open ocean without refreshing your skills?

Kit

Preparing yourself is one thing, but not preparing your kit can easily ruin a dive, especially if you end up returning to the boat with only one fin, a missing mask or more water in your camera housing than the manufacturer recommends.

Your kit needs to be serviced and fit for purpose, and it all needs to fit. That's a different article, but what about carrying a few dive-saving items?

These kits can be bought from your local dive-shop or put together for only a few pounds. Each dive on a liveboard can cost £50 or more, so carrying a few lightweight spares to avoid missing a dive has to be a good idea.

It's also a good idea to assemble your kit, check it all over for obvious damage and have a qualified professional service your regs and BC/wing if necessary.

You might even have a quick dive in your club's pool or at an inland site with your newly serviced regs just to check that


there are no issues – it has been known after maintenance.

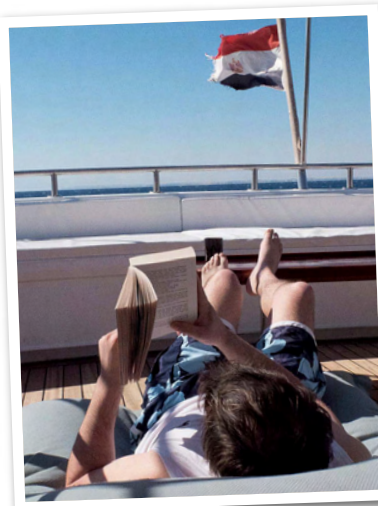
Consider as well whether your computer has a fresh battery – and what about your data-sender? If you have any reason to doubt any battery, change it now. You don't want to be set to dive the *Thistlegorm* and discover that you have no idea how much gas you have!

Check and clean camera O-rings, and perhaps spend a happy half-hour photographing your partners, children or dog with your camera in its housing.

If you spend some time practising before you dive, you won't be pointing at a moray and wondering: "Now what do I need to do to change that setting?"

Likewise, I've seen people get lost in their camera's settings and, added to a little bit of narcosis, lose awareness of their surroundings to the extent of dropping into the deep and needing rescuing.

Don't get me wrong, you'll love your liveboard holiday, but don't you want to love it even more? 



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STRAIT PORTRAITS



In the unusual submarine world of Lembeh Strait, exotic creatures with bizarre adaptations thrive. **JUSTIN GILLIGAN** turned it into an underwater studio to capture the results he wanted



THE BUSTLING PORT OF

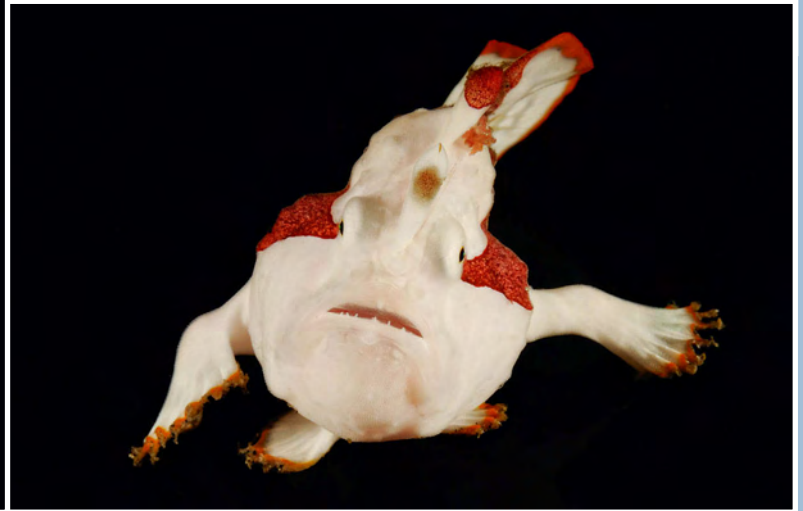
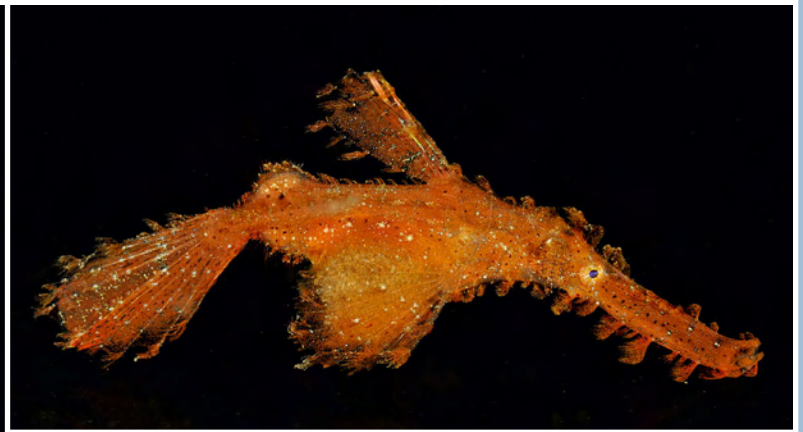
Bitung is alive with activity. Stevedores and other dockworkers jostle, frantically loading coconut oil, furniture, fresh tuna, spices and charcoal into the holds of cargo vessels bound for far-flung corners of the world.

Crew on other vessels pass the time on the glass-calm strait beyond Bitung with whimsical upbeat music pumping from wheelhouses. This body of water, 30km long and barely a kilometre wide at some sections, is located between the northern tip of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi (where Bitung Port is situated) and a much smaller island named Lembeh.

Mountains surround the scene on both sides and bear testament to the volcanic activity that sculpted this dramatic landscape over geological time-scales. Clouds float suspended over the highest peaks, shrouding the mysteries of the lush tropical rainforest.

Strange inhabitants seek shelter here in the dense undergrowth, including the world's smallest primate, the diminutive tarsier, a wide-eyed creature no bigger than a human fist, and the black macaque, the face of which bears a striking resemblance to a human's.

The copra and fishing industries provide most of the income for the 200,000 people who live here. Small coastal villages pepper the coast, and are



surrounded by coconut palm groves that tower into the sky and shade the rows of fishing-boats that line the shore.

The strait becomes illuminated at nightfall, as local fishers attract schools of small fish with kerosene lamps. They net and use these as bait for tuna and other large predatory fish on the coral reefs beyond the strait.

These coral reefs lie within an area regarded as the global epicentre of tropical marine biodiversity and are home to the greatest diversity of coral and reef fish in the world.

During a series of ice ages, the low sea level forced surviving coral reef species to persist and evolve here in isolation.

As the seas rose and warmed, many species were dispersed throughout the Indo-Pacific on the ebb and flow of far-reaching currents.

The coral reefs here are ablaze with colour and diversity, akin to the sights of the great Brazilian carnival.

In stark contrast, the marine environment of Lembbeh Strait is like a quiet backwater just outside of town that is home to the strange and reclusive – those who never really wanted to be a part of all the glitz and glamour.

Hidden within the barren algae-covered sand plains is a treasure trove of unique aquatic life. Many of the bizarre creatures that thrive in the soft sediment

Clockwise from top of opposite page:
Chromodoris nudibranch with hitch-hiking emperor shrimp; reef squid; clown frogfish; boxer crab; blue-ringed octopus; tiger shrimps.

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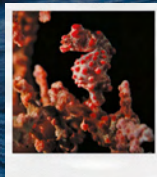
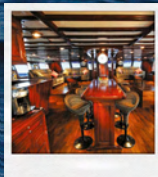
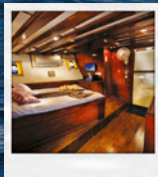
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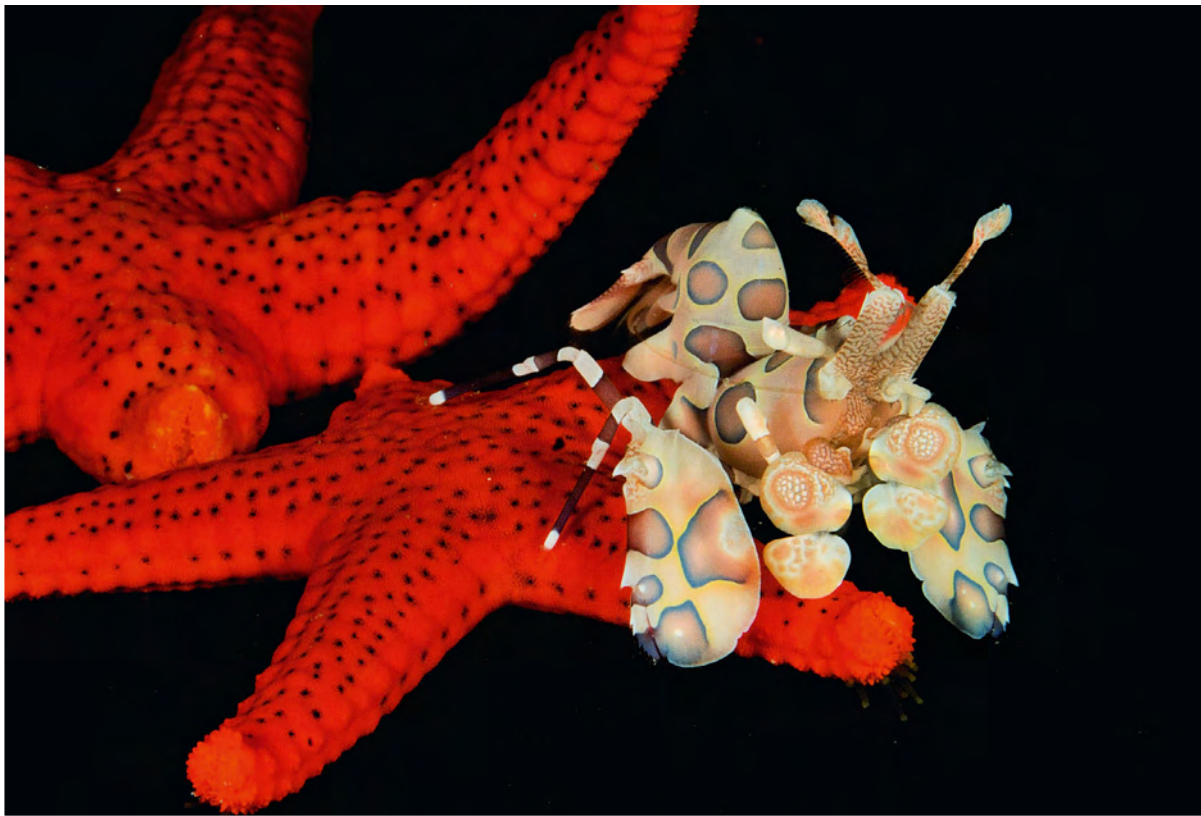
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Clockwise from left:
Harlequin shrimp feeding
on seastars; Ambon
scorpionfish; flamboyant
cuttlefish.

and discarded trash are found only here. For others, this is the only place in which they are found in such abundance.

The seabed at first appears desolate, except for discarded fishing net, tyres and anything else sent down from the world above. Like an oasis in the desert, each piece of trash turns into treasure by creating habitats for settling larvae.

In time, an eclectic mix of predators follows suit, each with bizarre adaptations akin to peculiar creatures dreamt up by a science-fiction writer.

These waters are a hotspot for underwater photographers and, each year, millions of images are exposed of the strange creatures that call this place home. This form of scuba experience, “muck-diving”, is characterised by fine sediments, abundant macro life and often low visibility.

To achieve a fresh perspective on the strait’s unusual inhabitants, I set out to create intimate portraits of the critters, away from the grit and grime of their everyday home.

For many, the solution was simple. Where the critter occupied the water column, for example a delicate reef squid (*Sepioteuthis lessoniana*) or a rough-snout ghost pipefish (*Solenostomus paegnius*), I stopped my aperture down and used an f-stop of f22 or greater.

This allowed me to underexpose the background water, making it black, and rely on a bright burst of artificial light from my strategically positioned

flashguns to shed light into their otherwise secretive lives.

Other instances required different solutions, such as for Ambon scorpionfish (*Pteroidichthys amboinensis*) covered in fleshy filaments that made them barely visible against the algae-covered seafloor, or the brightly coloured T-bar nudibranch (*Ceratosoma tenue*) with a hitchhiking emperor shrimp (*Periclimenes imperator*).

To create the simple and intimate portraits I had envisaged, I developed a small portable studio. It was collapsible and completely open, comprising a black perspex base and back wall.





At no point were these small models forced to participate in a shoot. If they weren't comfortable, they were left to get back to their usual business in the strait. It was essential that these images be created on their terms.

The brightly coloured shrimps are standouts in Lembeh Strait's underwater menagerie. Occupying every nook, cranny and available space, crustaceans occur within anemones, corals, and sponges, in the rubble and on the sediment.

The boxer crab (*Lybia tessellata*) lives in a mutual relationship with two anemones, which it carries on its claws like a boxer's gloves. The anemones' stinging cells protect it against predators, and in return the boxer provides food for its protectors.

The charismatic harlequin shrimp (*Hymenocera elegans*) gently flutters back and forth like a wind-up toy, and is often found feeding on seastars.

A vast group of cephalopods inhabits

this waterway. Perhaps the least cryptic is the flamboyant cuttlefish (*Metasepia pfefferi*), a species that uses its lower tentacles and back mantle flaps to crawl along the seafloor.

The coconut octopus (*Amphioctopus marginatus*) is active at night. By day it uses whatever it can find, including coconuts, bivalve shells, glass jars or tins to take shelter from other predators.

Lembeh Strait is filled with scorpionfish, many of which have the ability to hide in plain sight. The devil scorpionfish (*Inimicus didactylus*) is usually found mostly buried in the sand, with only its goggle-like eyes protruding from the sediment. This species is often observed scurrying over soft sediment with its finger-like pectoral fins.

The undisputed master of camouflage is the frogfish. It walks along the bottom on its hand-like adapted fins until it finds the perfect place to stop and fish.

Once settled, it wiggles a lure in front of its mouth in the hope of engulfing inquisitive prey.

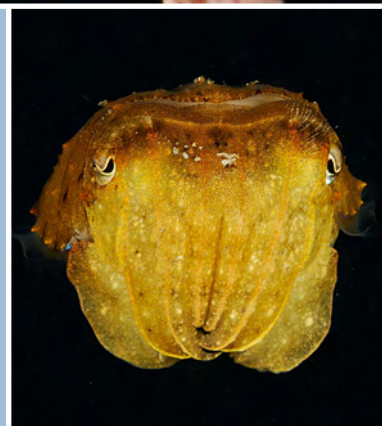
Barely the size of a fingernail, the pygmy seahorse (*Hippocampus bargibanti*) is one of the star attractions.

Its bright pink and white nodular body allows it to blend in perfectly with the coral polyps on its *Muricella* seafan home.

These images would not have been possible without the assistance of the staff of Lembeh Hills Resort and Minahasa Lagoon. Thank you in particular to dive guides Robby Manialup and Edman Lasut for their expertise.



Clockwise from top left: Mimic octopus; pygmy seahorse; broadclub cuttlefish; Elizabeth's nudibranch; painted frogfish.





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WELL HELLO, MOLLY ROSE. Like most of us after a good long dive, when you finally had to surface I must say you looked fairly annoyed that it was all over.

Having had nine months suspended in a liquid world, muffled and weightless, to finally emerge to a place of bright lights and bustling figures must have been quite a shock.

But a long dive requires a long ascent and you made several stops on the way, all of which proved somewhat emotional for your mum.

But emerge you finally did, and were instantly the most fabulous and beautiful thing I'd ever seen. The fact that you actually looked quite a lot like a furious, ginger Winston Churchill seems to have passed me by.

You were perfect in every way, a veritable supermodel, albeit a rather petulant one who howled in outrage at the indignity of it all.

But you're a good strong lass, born within a mile of the coast in Torbay Hospital. You entered a world with the whiff of the sea on the wind, and that's the way I hope you'll live your life.

SO, WHERE TO BEGIN? You are born an islander, with the blood of ocean voyagers in your veins.

Your ancient ancestors almost certainly arrived with the crunch of a bow on a shingle beach, and the vast majority of your people appeared from beneath the horizon, sailing on fickle currents under a temperate breeze.

Your nation is a lump of rock moored at the eastern edge of a vast ocean, and at the western edge of a continent. Your relationship with the sea is already as strong as anyone's in Europe,



it's in your blood. The whisper of the waves is the backing track of your life. It's your heritage and your identity.

And so I can't wait to wrap you up warm, and carry you down the coast path that leads from my door. I can't wait to show you the sea, to watch you take that first deep breath of ozone, and to listen with you to the percussive explosions of breakers in the coves and gullies of South Devon.

You'll grow up with sand between your toes, and I'll watch over you as you venture further

and further from shore. I'll show you your first crab in a rockpool, like some armoured monster from another world and better than any Hollywood movie.

Your first fish will be a real event, one that sees you run shrieking through the shallows as it explodes like quicksilver before you.

You'll never have seen anything move so fast – they leave vapour trails of bubbles. We'll take our first breath together under water, and I'll hold your hand as your eyes widen at the wonder of it all.

AND THEN, MOLLY ROSE, when you return to your liquid world, that's when the fun will really start.

We'll explore shipwrecks, heeling time-capsules emerging from the fog of the sea floor. We'll hover together off the isolated volcanic rock of Roca Partida, 5km of water beneath our fin-tips, and watch manta rays pirouette up from the deep blue to meet us.

They are the size of vast, black dragons, 200 times your weight, and yet they'll sweep so close to you that all you will feel is a gentle sirocco of water as they pass.

We'll slip off the back of a boat in Tonga and scull towards humpbacks as they sing a melody so powerful you'll feel it in your marrow.

It's a tune that has echoed along thermoclines since long before our time, with lyrics that we still don't understand.

Then we'll hang in a cage in the Killing Zone beside the bedlam of Dyer Island, and watch the most impressive animal on Planet Earth materialise out of the gloom before us with a half-smile of predatory intent.

BY THE TIME YOU'RE A fully fledged adult diver, I wonder where technology will have taken you?

You'll look back on us now with our twin-cylinders and boxy rebreathers and you'll laugh. But I suspect you'll also be a bit jealous, because we are savouring the great adventure of a sport that is still so young, one that even today requires a whiff of the pioneering spirit.

When you're my (considerable) age, I suspect that going for a dive will be like a walk in the park – all silent computers and oxygen-rich gels.

You'll grow up in an uncertain world, with the oceans broken and beaten by those who have gone before. But for all the pessimism there is also real hope, and signs that with the right people and a little bit of precious time, perhaps your generation can halt the damage that's been done by mine.

I'll travel with you for the rest of my life, tracing the blue curve of the earth, and together we'll follow the shadows in the sea.

Can't wait.

Lots of love, Dad xxx



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LANZA-NUDI!



LISA COLLINS gets more of an eyeful than she bargained for when she visits the fleshpots of Lanzarote

A ARGH! WHAT IS *THAT* floating on the surface? Pale, with lots of appendages flapping around – is it a strange, deformed beluga, or a giant squid come to join me on my safety stop?

As I swim closer to complete my safety stop directly beneath it, my regulator nearly falls out my mouth when I realise what I'm seeing – a man, completely nude, doing an untidy breast-stroke!

Above: Unwelcome sighting at Charco Del Palo.

Below: A friendly little blenny.
Charco Del Palo

Suddenly I spot another man, then a woman. Oh no, how am I going to surface amid all this naked flesh?

Swimming towards the steep ladder welded to the rock cliff, I surface and hang onto the rope strung across the small inlet, to help stop me being carried onto the rocks in the swells.

The nudists get there before me. Trying not to stare as, one by one, they clamber up the ladder, I finally get my turn.

I have been diving at a site called Charco Del Palo, off a small rocky cliff in the town of Mala, around a 20-minute drive north along the eastern coast of Lanzarote, from Costa Tegui and 30 minutes from the capital of Arrecife.

Cruz Yago Gonzalez, probably one of the friendliest dive-guides I have come across, had, with her apprentice Sam Hutchinson, arranged to drive me there, as it was reputed to be one of the best dive-sites on the island.

Dive-centre manager for Native Diving in Costa Tegui, owned by the jolly and jovial Jose, she had moved to the island from her home-town Madrid many years ago, and dived year-round on all the island's dive-sites.

This vast experience was appreciated, but her fun side had decided not to warn me of the unusual marine life I might encounter at Mala, a German clothing-optional town.

The dive-site had lived up to its

reputation. Carefully negotiating the steep steps cut into the rock of the cliff, we made our way down to a flat rock positioned perfectly as a platform for a giant-stride entry into the water.

The cool 20° water made me gasp as I hit the surface, my body having been warmed by Lanzarote's lovely winter sun.

Descending in good visibility of around 20m, we made our way between two pinnacles jutting out of the water to a white-sand bottom scattered with small volcanic boulders at around 12m.

Winding through the volcanic rocks, we discovered swim-throughs, caves and lava flows going down to 30m.

GLIMPING AN ATLANTIC RAY in one cave, I swam towards it, hoping to take a photo, but it was too quick for me.

I stopped on a sandy patch to photograph a small blenny hiding in a hole, and was suddenly aware of a swish as an angel shark took flight and passed within inches of me.

I tried to switch my macro wet lens for a wide-angled one, but had time only to snap the shark as it disappeared from my field of view.

Switching back to macro, my little blenny friend posed and pouted from his recess for several minutes. Then it was time to swim back to the cliff for my interesting safety stop.

I had travelled to Lanzarote in search of a viable alternative to Egypt for underwater photography courses.



About 80 miles off the African coast, Lanzarote is the easternmost island in the Spanish Canary Islands. Covering only around 327sq miles, it is easy to reach any of its many dive-sites, very cleverly and informatively described and illustrated in *Guía de Inmersiones Lanzarote*, a guide published in English/ Spanish (download it at www.turismo.lanzarote.com).

With dive-sites from 6-50m depth, the diving is suitable for all levels, from beginner to advanced technical. Most sites encompass large areas, so you can dive several times on the same one in different directions.

Being of volcanic origin the diving is varied and very good, with plenty of caves, lava flows, swim-throughs, healthy corals and fish life fed by the Atlantic currents.

The steep cliffs close to the coast drop off to around 200m, bringing nutrients up from the deep and making Lanzarote's dive-sites some of the most diverse in the world, with plentiful and varied macro life and huge schools of fish.

With almost year-round sun and little rain, this island is a perfect quick, cheap getaway. The Atlantic waters are fairly cool, reaching a balmy 23° in summer and dropping to around 18° in winter.

There are five distinct areas for diving – Playa Blanca in the south, Puerto del Carmen (south-east), Costa Noreste (east), and Archipelago Chinijo (north).

The islands in the archipelago are protected by the Marine Biosphere Reserve and offer some of the best diving on the island, but can be dived only when the wind is in the right direction, as the



currents can be very strong and the long crossing rough.

WE MET CRUZ AND SAM at Native Diving for a shore-dive off Playa del Jablillo beach in front of the dive-centre. This sheltered man-made bay offers safe and calm waters year-round.

We would time the dive to coincide with high tide so that we could pass over the underwater rock wall at the entrance to the bay, to dive in the open ocean along the harbour walls.

Passing over the sand at only 4m, we had our eyes peeled for another angel shark. Striped mullet were busy hoovering the sand for food, while chub and a group of spot-tail pinfish gathered around a rocky outcrop to one side of the bay. Snorkellers swam overhead, watching our every move.

Making swift work of the length of the bay, we soon arrived at the underwater wall protecting the bay. Large red-lipped blennies abounded between the giant boulders forming the wall.

The surge over the rocks made it impossible to stop to take a photo, so I went with the flow and was pushed out of the bay into the open ocean, the bottom dropping away to around 8m.

On the sandy bottom I looked into nooks and crannies in the wall for more blennies, but they obviously preferred the top. A few fire-worms moved surprisingly quickly over the rocks, while several brightly coloured *flabellina* nudibranchs stood out in bright contrast.

Sharp-nosed pufferfish swam above the reef in pairs, coming quite close to us.

As the very relaxed dive ended we swam back to the wall, where the sea level had dropped to leave only around 1.5m clearance over the rocks.

Horizontal and making sure to have no bits dangling, we waited for the next swell to torpedo us over the wall into the calm waters of the bay.

JUST ON THE OUTSKIRTS of Costa Teguse is a small bay where the *Telamon*, a cargo ship from the Ivory Coast, ran aground in 1981 with its valuable cargo of wood. The stern projects out of the water very close to shore, while the broken-off bow lies close by in around 12m.

Kitting up on the beach in the warm sunshine, we marvelled that we were the only people around.

The flat surface waters surrounding the shipwreck belied the strong onshore current below. We fought against it to swim to the wreck. Swirling the silty-soft sand into clouds, the current slowed our progress in only 5-10m visibility.

Suddenly we were upon the wreck, its bulk offering some protection as we hugged close to the hull, which we followed until we reached the section where the bow had sheered off.



Above left: *Flabellina* nudibranch.

Left: A large dusky grouper.



CRUZ YAAO GONZALES

Sinking onto the sand, I looked into the open stern at a blue starfish spreadeagled on the coral-encrusted hull.

As we regrouped, we decided to push on to the bow section to the north-west. Only around 100m away, it took Cruz a while to locate in the bad visibility, but once there we found the vis improved to around 15-20m.

Largely intact, the bow section makes for an interesting dive. It lies partially on its side, with lots of structures to swim around, through and over.

Schools of fish gather around the wheelhouse, while the sun rays penetrate through and down to light the wreck.

A large porthole made a great frame for images of each other. I'd like to return in better vis, as its shallow depth and profile would make for amazing sunlight images.

ON OUR FINAL DAYS, Cruz took us over to Puerto del Carmen and Playa Chica beach, where six shore-dives and another five boat-dives can be accessed

from the same jetty.

It was hard to find space to park the minibus among the many cars and vans. Weaving between seemingly hundreds of divers kitting up, I was already missing the seclusion of our previous dives.

As we joined the throng, Cruz pointed out the two entry points, one from a beach to the left of the jetty, the other from steps on its right side. Native Diving also uses a boat from the jetty.

Feeling like large walking seals with our heavy equipment, we dodged between the many sandcastle-digging children, fussing mothers and scantily clad European men in their tiny Speedos.

Submerging among throngs of near-naked bodies in the cool water, we swam out toward the furthest point of the bay on the left.

We were aiming for a large cave called the Cathedral at around 32m. The bottom had been kicked up by previous divers to reduce visibility to around 10m.

Reaching the point, we swam over a



CRUZ YAAO GONZALES



SAM HUTCHINSON

small rise and descended to around 28m and the wreck of a small boat.

Surprisingly, all signs of returning divers had disappeared. We didn't see another until we hit the shallows again, which seemed remarkable considering the number who had been kitting up, but highlighting how many sites there were in Puerto Del Carmen.

Visibility improved to around 20m. Lying on a rock ledge just above the wreck was a large dusky grouper. It posed as I approached and let me take lots of photos.

I signalled to my buddy, Sue, but the grouper scooted off into the blue as she came over. Shrugging, Sue showed me

Clockwise from left: The wreck of the *Telamon*; posing in a porthole frame; the bow section.

I CHECKED MY GAUGE TO FIND I HAD USED UP TWICE AS MUCH AIR AS USUAL

what she had been photographing – more nudibranchs, posing prettily against a dark background.

We signalled to each other to find the cave. Descending to around 30m, we came across several large caverns before reaching the end of a wall, but had too little air left to continue to the big one so returned to shallower water.

There we found a beautiful little brown seahorse on a rock at the entrance to the bay in only around 6m. As the water surged around us, I managed to get a



few images before being pushed into the bay, where we investigated the sand, and Sue tried, in vain, to photograph the very skittish peacock flounders.

After a surface-interval drink at the lovely little restaurant on the jetty, we decided to come back another day to try for the Cathedral. Instead we took the steps to try the site to the right of the jetty and look for another seahorse in an old crate at around 22m.

Cruz led us there almost immediately. The little yellow seahorse had curled its tail around the bars of the crate, using them as an anchor. Under the crate was a tiny pygmy filefish, which darted fiercely towards me as I tried to photograph the seahorse. Sue had found a bright red starfish on the golden sand, a tiny anemone and lots of peacock flounders.

Trying to photograph the many striped mullet as they sifted through the sand alongside goatfish and chub became a game. They remained just beyond my strobe capabilities.

Our final dive was another attempt on the Cathedral. Cruz and Sam had clients to lead, so Sue and I headed for the cave.

At around 10m, I noticed a big stream of bubbles coming from my hose. I checked my gauge to find that I had used up twice as much air as usual.

If we went straight to the cave, stayed only for a minute or two and then ascended, I thought I would be OK, but on checking my gauge again at 20m, I saw that I was down to 120 bar!

I signalled my disappointment and apology to Sue, and we returned to around 10m. At 12m my friendly dusky grouper recognised me and swam over to greet me. This time Sue was able to get a couple of images before he swam away to join another huge grouper.

WE COULDN'T FIND THE SEAHORSE

on the rock again, but there were lots of nudibranchs, fireworms and an orange starfish. Swimming into the bay at around 5m, we kept over to the right-hand side to investigate the rocks.

Brightly coloured wrasse and parrotfish patrolled the reef, where vivid red scorpionfish lurked everywhere, daring us to put our hands down to steady ourselves in the slight swell as we took photos. Lots



Left: Seahorse at Puerto Del Carmen.

Above: Sharpnose pufferfish.

Right: A fierce pygmy filefish.

Below left: Dive-site entry point at Puerto Del Carmen.



of tiny arrow crabs busily collected food with their pointed rostrums.

All too soon, sucking the very last breaths from my tank, I popped my head up to the surface, and swam back to the shore. We had managed a 62-minute dive, despite my lack of air!

Cruz was excited to find out whether we had seen the angel shark – how did we miss it? Oh well, there's always next time, and with the close location, cheap prices and excellent diving perfect for underwater photography, I am sure it will be very soon.



FACTFILE

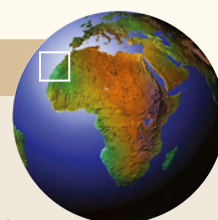
GETTING THERE ▶ Fly direct with BA from Gatwick, or book a London or regional flight with Monarch, Thomson, Thomas Cook, Ryanair, Jet 2 or Easyjet.

DIVING & ACCOMMODATION ▶ Native Diving, www.nativediving.com. Hotels, apartments and villas are available in Costa Tegui. BeLive Grand Tegui Playa Hotel or Apartamentos Galeon can be booked through Native Diving or travel companies including British Airways Holidays.

WHEN TO GO ▶ Year-round. Summer air temperatures are 27°C, winter 20°. Summer sea temperatures 23°, winter 18°. Take a 5-7mm wetsuit and add hood and gloves in winter.

PRICES ▶ BeLive Grand Tegui Playa from 63 euros pp a night. Return flights from £80. 10-dive package from 200 euros.

TOURIST INFORMATION ▶ www.turismodecanarias.com



Inspired to go the extra mile

Underwater Photography: Art & Techniques
by Nick Robertson-Brown

IT'S UNLIKELY THAT YOU'LL hear anyone complain that there are too few underwater photography manuals about. Every few months seems to bring another contender, or an updated edition of an older book.

It's interesting to observe how the various authors try to carve out a niche for themselves. Much depends on their starting point – do they assume that readers, the wannabe underwater photographers, have never picked up a camera before, or

a very lucid writing style and the benefit of clear, attractive diagrams as well as his own excellent photos as examples and sources of inspiration.

Some of these shots, such as *The Krays* (right), or a dramatically lit lifeboat on the *Salem Express* wreck, you would give a lot to be able to call your own.

The writer is a biologist, as so many of the best underwater photographers are, and passionate about marine conservation, so clearly life-forms are his thing. I like the way he throws in tidbits such as "*Southern sting rays, for example, generally become much easier to approach after mid-day*", and would have been happy to see more of these.

By comparison chapters such as those on wrecks and models do seem a tad sketchy in terms of detailed advice, perhaps reflecting Nick's balance of interest.

Overall, although slimmer than some guides, I found this a valuable and enjoyably readable addition to the photography bookshelf.

Crowood
ISBN: 9781847976574
Softback, 176pp, £16.99

SEPIA PICTURE-LED

The Ships of Scapa Flow
by Campbell McCutcheon

IF THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF underwater photography guides, the same might be said about books on

Scapa Flow. The Orkneys wreck graveyard is rightly hailed as one of the world's great dive locations, and there are plenty of volumes about both its history and the diving there.

Several manage to combine the two aspects into compelling and informative narratives.

If you have dived Scapa or are simply interested in military wrecks, you may well own some of these volumes by the likes of Rod Macdonald and Lawson Wood. Whether you consider adding *The Ships of Scapa Flow* by maritime historian Campbell McCutcheon to your collection is another matter.

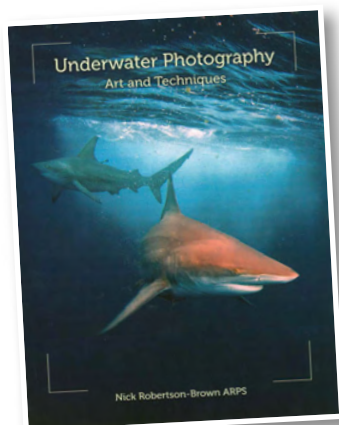
This new book boasts an impressive and evocative collection of sepia warship photographs and postcards from the Great War period and its aftermath.

However, my growing impression as I read it (which even a slow reader like me can do in well under an hour) was not so much that this was "*the story of the ships of Scapa Flow*", as the publisher claims, as a picture collection with added notes.

It's as if the 138 photos (with the odd illustration) were shuffled into groups that then dictated the shape of the book, with a brief chapter to lead into each set of images.



NICK ROBERTSON-BROWN



at least never attempted to do more than get the sun over their shoulder and press a button?

Or do they take a certain amount of basic knowledge as read, and concentrate on the finer points?

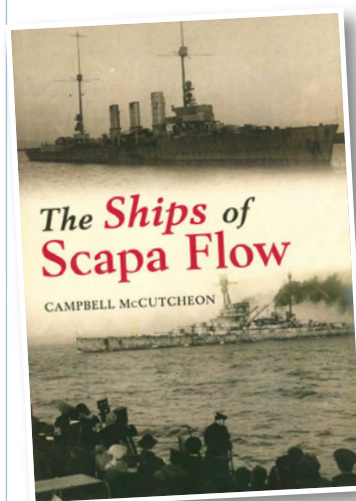
Nick Robertson-Brown has, sensibly I think, opted for the latter course in this, his first book.

While he is careful to cover the vital fundamentals such as the Exposure Triangle (shutter/aperture/ISO), he launches into the book at a gallop without pausing to dot every f/stop. For what I take to be his intended audience, that's what a glossary is for!

The clue is in the subtitle *Art and Techniques*, and it is helping the existing underwater photographer to produce better, more interesting pictures that preoccupies the author, (much as it does Alex Mustard in *Be The Champ!*)

Nick and his wife Caroline run Frogfish Photography in Manchester, and teach their own training course, the modules of which complement the chapters in the book.

The author is helped in getting straight down to business by having



The lack of logical narrative flow is illustrated by Chapter Two, headed *The Phantom Fleets*. While the story of Winston Churchill's successful fleet of decoy merchant ships disguised as warships is a fascinating one, it touches only tangentially on the story of Scapa Flow and the sinking of the German High Seas Fleet.

We get chapters on HMS *Hampshire* and *Vanguard* and on the *Royal Oak*, which remain in situ but, as war graves, cannot be dived. We get very little on the eight great German warships that we can dive, and quite a lot on post-war salvage operations, where previously unseen photographs are available.

In this picture-led history, each chapter seems to exist in isolation. Maritime historians may be tempted by the images, but for less than the £15 this book costs, divers can probably do better.

Amberley Publishing
ISBN: 9781445633862
Softback, 96pp, £14.99

Reviews by Steve Weinman

TOP 10 DIVING BOOKS

as listed by www.amazon.co.uk (5 February, 2014)

1. *Fifty Places to Dive Before You Die*, by Chris Santella (1)
2. *Raising the Dead*, by Philip Finch (-)
3. *The Darkness Below*, by Rod Macdonald (-)
4. *Manual of Freediving*, by Umberto Pelizzari & Stefano Tovaglieri (-)
5. *The Darkness Below (Kindle edition)*, by Rod Macdonald (-)
6. *Scuba Diving*, by Monty Halls & Miranda Krestovnikoff (3)
7. *Amazing Diving Stories*, by John Bantin (2)
8. *Scuba Diving & Snorkelling for Dummies*, by John Newman (-)
9. *PADI Open Water Diver Manual*, by Drew Richardson (-)
10. *Deep Descent*, by Kevin F McMurray (-)

OUT OF THE MÖVENPICK...

Red Sea operator Emperor Divers has relocated its El Gouna dive centre from the Mövenpick resort to the Three Corners Ocean View Hotel, and states that the move to this location on Abu Tig Marina will provide its guests with a more convenient service.

"Many of our guests stay at the Ocean View and in hotels around the marina, so it makes much more sense to take the diving closer to them," says General Manager Mike Braun.

Emperor provides free transfers from Abu Tig Marina to surrounding hotels, including the Mövenpick. For guests staying at the Mövenpick it says that if anything the location is more convenient, as the transfer will be direct to the marina.

Emperor reckons Abu Tig is "a great area for bars and restaurants as well as for evening meanders around the marina."

Meanwhile the operator reports that it has achieved an Excellence in Customer Service accreditation from Feefo, a customer feedback tool used by the likes of the BBC.

"We score 98% positive feedback across all our Red Sea dive centres," says Mike Braun.

» www.emperordivers.com



...and möving in

Emperor Divers' vacated berth at the Mövenpick Resort & Spa El Gouna is being filled by another well-known name, Euro-Divers Egypt. The resort boasts more than 2km of private beach, four pools and a variety of sports and leisure facilities for both divers and non-divers.

The dive-school has been renovated, says Euro-Divers, and offers courses to everyone from eight-year-olds to instructors, as well as access to some 30 dive and snorkelling sites.

» www.euro-divers.com

NEW BOATS FOR DIVERS AT SPEYSIDE



The diving in Speyside is probably the best in Tobago, according to Oonasdivers, and Blue Waters Inn & Dive Centre there takes delivery of new dive-boats this month.

"Giant strides from these hardboats will be so much easier than the long-drop backward roll from the previous smaller boats – this also means that non-diving partners can meet up between dives," says the tour operator.

A week in May would cost from £1195, including flights from Gatwick, transfers, seven nights B&B, 10 boat dives and kayak use. A 30kg baggage allowance is standard.

» www.oonasdivers.com

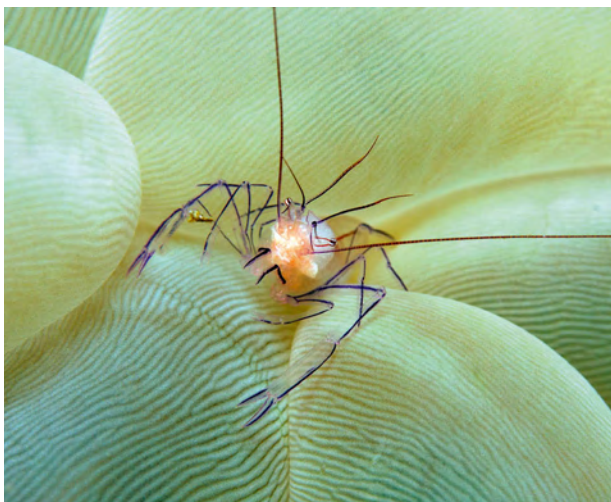
Book early for Lembeh critter classes

If you've been inspired by Justin Gilligan's *Lembeh Portraits* elsewhere in this issue, you may care to know that Ultimate Diving is offering places on the third annual "Capturing Critters in Lembeh" digital imaging workshop at the Lembeh Resort, North Sulawesi, from 3 December.

Adobe expert Erin Quigley and "underwater photo pioneer" Keri Wilk team up with in-house photo pro Sascha Janson and marine biologist Dimpy Jacobs to provide a series of presentations, daily seminars and one-to-one time aimed at covering all the angles.

The package starts from £1999pp (two sharing) for 10 nights' stay with 24 guided boat-dives and seminars followed by in-water practice. Flights are not included in the package but can be arranged by the tour operator.

» www.ultimatediving.co.uk



Wild week in Malapascua

One of Dive Worldwide's new offerings is the Evolution Resort in Malapascua in the Philippines. This little island, rapidly reconstructed since last year's typhoon damage, offers access to wrecks and colourful reef, and the operator says that divers can expect to see manta rays and whitetip, blacktip, bamboo, nurse, cat, hammerhead and, at Monad Shoal, thresher sharks, this



STEVE WEINMAN

being the only place in the world where they can be closely observed every day.

Diving is year-round but Dive Worldwide recommends September as a great month for underwater life, and charges from £1565pp for seven nights' B&B hotel accommodation, 10 dives and international flights.

» www.diveworldwide.com

QUARTER OFF SHEENA

Werner Lau has reduced rates for divers booking trips on Maldives liveaboard *Sheena* until 4 May by 25%. "World-class diving during the best season in the southern atolls of the Maldives is guaranteed at an unbeatable price," it says. Prices for a week aboard including diving start from 1106 euros, but you do need to book by the end of March.

» www.wernerlau.com

SWITCHING SIRENS

Among the offerings on Regaldiv's 2014 portfolio, is a Palau and Philippines Combo itinerary, which divides a 13-night diving holiday between the *Philippine Siren* and *Palau Siren* liveaboards.

Costing from £3565 per person, Regaldiv says that the trip allows divers to log up to 42 dives, including seven night-dives, wreck dives and drift dives, and that thresher and whale sharks plus macro life will be in the dive crew's sights.

Included will be trips to Pescador Island off Cebu, where divers can swim among schools of sardines and thresher sharks are sometimes seen, and Blue Corner, arguably Palau's most famous dive-site.

The price includes full board



MALCOLM NOBBS

accommodation, air/nitrox tanks and weights. Flights are not included but can be arranged through Regaldiv.

► www.regaldiv.co.uk

MALDIVES TENNERS



blue o two's move into launching its own motor yacht in the Maldives, blue 'Honors Legacy', has been well-reported, but the UK operator has added the news that with its own liveaboard and four others it is now offering 10-day trips on no fewer than 10 Maldives itineraries.

Prices range from £1799 in September for a choice of two "In

Focus" week-long photographic trips with Saeed Rashid or "Magical Maldives" (North Male, Ari, Rasdhoo and South Male Atolls), to £2495 for a wide range of 10-night options, including the northern atolls.

Prices include return flights from London to Male, transfers, full board and diving.

► www.blueotwo.com

IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR FANTASY...

The Caribbean private-island beach resort of Fantasy Island in Roatan, Honduras, is offering all-inclusive seven-night dive packages.

These include transfers, full-board accommodation with drinks, up to

three boat-dives a day plus a night dive and unlimited shore-diving, from US \$1063pp (two sharing).

Fantasy Island, which has 115 rooms, claims that its PADI dive-centre is one of the best diving operations in

Wanted! 1000-euro reward

They seek it here, they seek it there – *Algarvia Alba* is a highly elusive nudibranch found (or not) off the coast of Portugal, but if you capture an image of one there, you could be in line for a 1000 euro reward.

The 5mm-long white sea-slug with red-orange appendages was discovered in the 1960s but has yet to be photographed off the Algarve, where Subnauta Diving of Portimao has issued the reward offer.

The slug has such a low profile that we couldn't even get the rights to a usable image.

However, Hidden Depths Dive Tours arranges trips to that part of the world and says that weekend packages including flights, accommodation, transfers and four dives with all equipment start from £345. It's a long shot, but if you're sharp-eyed and lucky you might even profit on the deal!

► www.hiddendepthsdivetours.com

Indonesia online for UK

Indonesia's interestingly named Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has launched a tourism website dedicated to the UK market.

It provides detailed information for those planning to visit the world's largest archipelago ("17,000-plus islands and counting"), which is DIVER readers' declared fourth favourite overseas destination.



The launch is tied in with national airline Garuda Indonesia introducing in May the UK's only non-stop direct flights from London to Jakarta.

► www.tourism-indonesia.co.uk

CRETAN BASE

Kalypso Cretan Village Resort & Spa lies on Crete's south coast on Pirate's Fjord beach in the Rethymnon area, and it caters for divers. Don't expect too much big stuff, except perhaps at Grouper Rock, but there are walls and caves among the eight or so sites.

A room for up to three people with breakfast costs from less than £400 a week, while the Kalypso Rock's Palace Dive Centre charges 250 euros for a 10-dive package.

► www.kalypsohotels.com

Oyster reckons it knows you

Oyster Diving has launched an online store for recreational divers which it says stocks all the major premium brands and complements its existing travel site www.oysterdivingholidays.com, its club www.oysterdivingclub.com and its school www.oysterdiving.com.

"We can now provide our customers with everything they require," claims Oyster Director Mark Murphy.

"By knowing most of our customers personally we are able to recommend them the right products by taking into account their experience and preferences."

► www.oysterdivingshop.com

WELL AND TRULY TESTED



The blue-sky thinking continues this month, as NIGEL WADE tests a switchless dive-light, a BC that thinks it's a cabin-bag and specs that fit in your mask. He kids you not!

LIGHT EXPOSURE MARINE SUB M3

EVERY WEEK I RECEIVE NEWS of another underwater light hitting the market. It seems that Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology is reaching its peak as far as power efficiency and output are concerned, so it's not surprising to see so many being used in waterproof bodies.

Nearly all the new lights I've seen are similar, and appear to have originated in the Far East. So it's refreshing to see one that is not only very different but entirely British-made.

The Sussex-based Exposure Marine Company sent me its spanking new Sub M3 to check out.

The Design

The Sub M3 is a small hand-held dive-lamp that uses three high-output LEDs and highly polished reflectors to provide a smooth spot beam. It is powered by lithium-ion batteries permanently sealed in a marine-grade anodised aluminium housing that's depth-rated to 200m.

What makes this light stand out from the crowd is its switching mechanism or, to be more precise, the lack of it. It's totally switchless.

The concept behind the Sub M3 is Exposure Marine's pioneering Motion Control Technology (MCT). A simple clockwise or anti-clockwise movement pattern will lock, unlock, turn on, turn off and change power modes. Give it a few taps and it will enter an SOS Flashing mode too.

The light is designed to be worn on the back of your hand, using a neoprene mount, giving a truly hands-free operation.

A rotation-sensitive digital fuel gauge, displaying remaining burntimes in hours and minutes, is set behind a clear Plexiglass panel at the rear, and also serves to indicate Power and Travel Lock modes as well as a charging gauge showing the battery's fill level as a percentage.

The light is charged via a clever dual wall-charger with a USB option. Two gold-plated wet connections and a magnet to hold the lead in place complete what is a well-thought-out product.

In Use

When I showed the light to some of my friends at Wraysbury Dive Centre, they were sceptical at first, and concerned that the circular movement required to operate the lamp would look too much like the "Are you OK?" sign, the training-

agency standard gesture used on night dives.

A good point, but in practice the unit required a very small circle of movement to do what I wanted it to do.

It is unlocked from the Travel mode by holding it vertically and scribing a small clockwise circle, then you hold it horizontally and scribe another clockwise circle to turn it on.

The light has two power modes, High and Low, and switching between them requires more small circular movements – clockwise to power up and the reverse for down.

With the light on and held vertically downwards, tapping the body switches it into

the SOS Flashing mode. It is switched back to a normal beam when a horizontal circle is scribed.

I know this all sounds incredibly complicated, but after a little practice it's a walk in the park, and quickly became intuitive for me.

I enjoyed the freedom of not having to reach round to find buttons or switches, especially while wearing thick neoprene gloves.

The one-handed operation meant that I could concentrate on diving as opposed to adding to the task-loading.

On the High setting the light is very bright. The narrow beam cut through the poor visibility like a knife through butter. I prefer this to a wide



Above: Exposure Marine Sub M3 dive lights in black and orange versions, with not a switch between them.



Dive-light and clever USB charger with gold-plated connections and magnetic keeper.

SPECS

PRICES ▶ £375

BEAM ▶ 20° Smooth Spot

BULBS ▶ Three XM-L2 LEDs

OUTPUT ▶ High 1563 lumens, Low 282l

BURNTIMES ▶ High 2hr, Low 18hr

RECHARGE TIME ▶ 12hr

SIZE ▶ 116mm x 53mm

WEIGHT ▶ 311g

COLOURS ▶ Black, orange or red

CONTACT ▶ www.exposuremarine.com

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★☆☆

or flood beam in these conditions, as it doesn't illuminate so many suspended particles and have a reverse effect, akin to driving in fog with your main beam on.

I found the Low power setting a little on the dull side under water in daylight, but in a dark environment it proved more than adequate for navigation and instrument-reading.

Bucket Test

As is becoming common practice at the **DIVER** Test Centre, I fully charged the light, switched it onto full power and chucked it into my yellow bucket of water to test the actual burntimes.

On full power it lasted for 126 minutes – six over the maker's stated two hours.

The battery gauge looked to be very accurate as it timed down.

I fell asleep during the low power test – forgive me, but 18 hours is a long time to stare at a glowing bucket and a timer.

In between tests the light took just short of 12 hours to fully recharge. The battery gauge has only two digits, so 99% is all you'll get to see when it's actually full.

Cupping Support

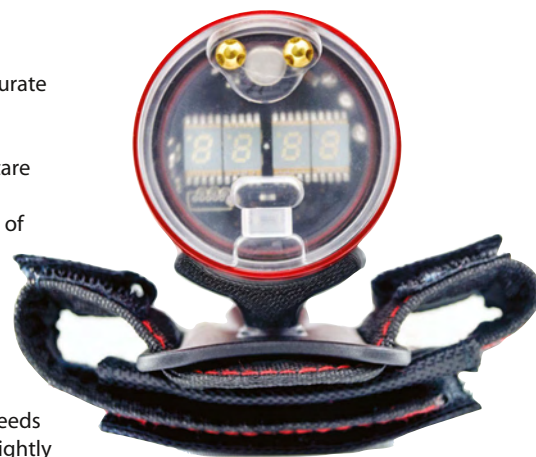
It became apparent that the hand-cradle needs some modification. It holds the lamp at a slightly downward angle and has just one Allen head bolt at the front to mount the light.

When I used the Sub M3 in real-world conditions it worked loose quite quickly and started to swing on its axis. I contacted the guys at Exposure Marine, who told me that they would find a solution and modification.

Although not very elegant, a cable-tie sorted the problem out for me while on site.

Exposure Marine tells me that it has since modified the cradle on the wrist-mount to increase the stability of the light and reduce the risk of knocking it out of line.

The new cupping support (*pictured above*) will feature on future wrist-mounts supplied for



the Sub M3. Existing owners can get in touch for a replacement (at info@expmarine.co.uk).

Conclusion

The gazillion dive-lights available all have claims to be brighter, last longer, go deeper, weigh less or be smaller than its competitors, but Exposure Marine's Sub M3 with its MCT is very different.

The build quality is excellent and it works very well. My initial scepticism soon turned to admiration for a product that can do its job with one hand tied behind its back. ■

BC/BACKPACK AERIS JETPACK

AIRLINE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCES tend towards the frugal. As a travelling diver the most you're likely to be able to take (without paying for extra weight or an extra bag) is 23kg in hold luggage and a carry-on allowance of somewhere between 5 and 7kg.

British Airways and some Easyjet flights offer carry-on baggage allowances of 23kg, as long as the overall dimensions of the bag fit within their



Above, from left: Semi-dry day-bag attached ready to travel; BC harness used to form rucksack.

size limits and you can lift the bag into the overhead lockers unaided.

For us divers that's a huge advantage, but what we need is cleverly designed luggage and smart packing to make the most of it.

Imagine being able to pack your entire scuba kit into one bag, stick it in an overhead locker on the plane, avoid the baggage handlers' torture chamber and know that it's safe and secure.

The US Oceanic company may have come up with a solution, in the form of its much talked-about AERIS Jetpack.

The Design

The Jetpack is a travel BC and a backpack all rolled into one, the idea being to allow you to travel with it as carry-on luggage.

A good-quality BC tends to take up a large percentage of your allotted space and weight, so the designers decided that this should form the basis, and then clip on a semi-dry rucksack that's large enough to take most of your other gear while keeping the end result within airline size limits.



Surprisingly for a travel BC, the Jetpack is made from fairly heavy-grade materials but weighed in at just 2.96kg on electronic scales.

The harness uses a combination of 1000 denier cordura and 800 denier double-coated nylon. The bladder is 420 denier nylon and has a bungee cord to draw the wing back to reduce drag and keep the bladder tidy and easy to pack.

A standard corrugated inflator hose is fitted complete with an integrated pull-dump and additional right-hand-side rear kidney-dump.

Tank attachment is via a camband placed at the top and a Velcro'd strap at the bottom for stabilisation. Dumpable weight-pouches are supplied and will take around 6kg.

There is also the option of non-dumpable cambelt pouches that will take a further 4kg.

This is a one-size-fits-all BC with an extremely adjustable harness system. The shoulder-straps have a lot of additional length and can be extended at both the top and bottom.

The excess webbing is then rolled up and held in place by Velcro keepers.

The chest-strap can be slid up and down a rail for best positioning, and the strap itself can be lengthened if required. The shoulder-straps incorporate webbing loops rather than D-rings for attaching accessories.

The cummerbund and waist-belt both allow loads of adjustment, and the weight-pockets can be moved around to obtain the best position for trim and balance.

A generous amount of strategically placed Velcro assists in the adjustment department and, once you have the right configuration, keeps everything just where you need it.

The waist-strap buckle works with a simple pull away from the body rather than a sideways yank, and is a neat touch.

In its packed form the BC is enclosed within its own separate section. The back is zipped up inside a single cover and the BC harness is used for the rucksack straps for the entire system.

The Day Bag

The rucksack-style bag is constructed from 800 denier double-coated nylon and has an overall capacity of 42 litres. It's made to a "semi-dry" spec, with water-resistant zips and more external pockets and internal pouches than you might reasonably expect.

If you feel the need, hideaway straps can be used to turn the bag into a standalone backpack when separated from the Jetpack.

The back is padded for comfort and will also aid in protecting a laptop tucked away in its own dedicated pouch.

The empty bag weighs just 0.9kg and clips to the BC with five snap-clips fitted to compression straps, so if the need arises you can squeeze it down to fit the airline size regulations.

In Use

I took the Aerus Jetpack halfway across the world and used it in the way in which it was designed. It took all my dive-kit and some clothes, plus my laptop and expensive torches.



The only thing that wouldn't fit were my fins. I use Mares Quattros, which proved too long and had to be packed in the hold baggage, but shorter fins would have been no problem.

As a backpack the Jetpack was comfortable and distributed the weight well. I used the outside pockets to keep my passport and travel documents secure but readily accessible.

I had no problems with the check-in staff at any of the airports I visited.

As a solution to carry-on dive kit it worked really well while travelling with an airline that allowed up to 23kg, though I wouldn't like to try to get it past the over-zealous staff of airlines that allow only 5kg.

Under water

Before getting the BC wet I had spent some time configuring it for my size and personal tastes, and found that making adjustments was easy enough.

To me the build quality and design make the Jetpack feel like a top-end product rather than

the lightweight travel BC it is. Under water it performed well, the wing configuration balancing nicely with my weight requirements, and it held me in a neutral position, slightly head-up but almost horizontal.

The bungee kept the wing tight, and made sure that it didn't flap around. Dumping air was easy in any position, from either the corrugated-hose shoulder-pull or kidney-dumps.

At the surface the BC supplied me with plenty of lift to keep my face well away from the water, although it did tend to push me forward a little.

The tank felt secure, and the soft back with its extra padding made the 30-plus dives I carried out using it a painless experience.

Conclusion

As airlines continue to restrict what divers can take abroad, yet still give generous allowances for golfers, innovative ideas that go some way to addressing our needs will always be welcome.

If more airlines follow the likes of BA and Easyjet, you'll be able to get the most out of the Aerus system. Alternatively, you could just pack it to whatever limits apply.

If my initial feeling was that the BC wouldn't cut the mustard under water, I was off the mark – it was excellent. I'm short and a little on the compact side (chubby) so a one-size-fits-all doesn't normally apply, but thanks to the huge range of adjustments I had no problems with the Jetpack. A big thumbs up to Oceanic.

If you want better baggage allowances, take up golf, but I can't see much use for a nine iron in the Maldives. ■

SPECS

PRICES ►► £457

SIZES ►► One size fits all

LIFT ►► Just under 14kg

WEIGHT ►► Combined 3.86 kg

CONTACT ►► www.diveaerus.com

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★☆☆

PRESCRIPTION MASK

AQUAVIZ UTS PRO CORE & INZERTS

IF YOU'RE A CONSTANT WEARER of prescription eyewear or suffering from the effects of ageing and need glasses for close-up work, you'll know the difficulties encountered in trying to find a solution to take under water.

Single-lens masks pose a particular problem, especially for those of us who need a progressive prescription to correct near, intermediate or far vision.

If you need glasses for reading or computer work, you'll appreciate the problems associated with bi-focal prescriptions and diving masks too.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if your arms were just that little bit longer, so you could get your dive computer with large graphics into your sharp focus range?

It would be a far better solution if you could take a pair of glasses under water with your exact lens prescription.

Enter the Aquaviz UTS Pro Core mask and Inzert with ophthalmic lenses.

The Mask

This mask is part of a range of Core Sportviz watersports products that includes swim and snorkel models with polycarbonate lenses. The UTS Pro Core is a low-volume single-tempered glass lens design. It features a high-grade, hypoallergenic, latex-free, black, soft silicon skirt with a double-reflex seal.

The frame is made from impact-resistant polymer with easy-adjust swivel buckles and has a split strap for even distribution at the back

of your head. Fluorescent orange livery finishes off what is a standard type of single-lens dive mask.

The Inserts

Core masks can be fitted with an insert that clips inside them. In the case of the dive-mask it fits to a rail, which in turn sits inside the mask between the top of the nose section and the bottom of the upper part of the mask frame.

The insert, or Inzert as Aquaviz calls it, has an aviator-shaped frame made from either clear or black polymer, and can be fitted with prescription lenses.

Four standard bifocal lenses are available as stock items – akin to buying reading glasses over the counter from your local pharmacy – or else the guys at Aquaviz will make you custom ophthalmic lenses in bifocal, progressive or single prescriptions to suit your requirements.

Empty Inzerts are also available should you wish to get them glazed by your own optician.

The Inzert is fixed in the mask at the same distance from your eyes as a standard pair of glasses for maximum field of vision and to reduce eyestrain.

The Inzerts come in two forms, Standard (clear polymer frame), with no anti-fog coating



Above: Aquaviz UTS Pro Core Mask and Inzerts in use.

Below: Sportviz Bi-Focal stock Inzert.



but supplied with a small tub of fog-free wax, or Pro (black polymer frame), with anti-fog-treated lenses.

In Use

I've been trying this mask and insert combination out for a month as I write, under water in varying conditions from freezing UK waters to tropical seas and super-heated swimming pools.

There's not a lot to report about the mask itself, a standard no-frills model that offers nothing more than others on the market.

It's the prescription inserts that place this



SPECS

PRICES ▶ UTS Pro mask £55, Pro Inzerts with anti-fog: Single Vision £55, Progressive Vision £90, Stock Bifocal £45, Inzert with no lenses £12

CONTACT ▶ www.sportviz.co.uk

DIVER GUIDE ▶ MASK ★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆

INZERT ★★★★★★★★★☆

set-up at the head of its class.

They sit in a perfect position, and in my case the bi-focal section allowed me to enjoy sharp definition when viewing my instruments and camera LCD screen.

My main concern initially was that of fogging, not on the mask lens (as with any new mask I prepared for that by scrubbing the inside with toothpaste and using a mask-clear product) but on the insert lenses.

I feared that water droplets would form and prove difficult to clear, but I'm pleased to report that this didn't happen. The Inzerts

I was given had the anti-fog coating and this seems to stop droplets from staying stuck to the lens – the drops ran away, leaving me with a clear view.

As for fogging, the Inzert coating did its job brilliantly, keeping the lenses from misting up even in the worst-case scenario of very cold water outside the mask and a warm face inside.

Conclusion

Any fears I had were unfounded. The UTS Pro mask is comfortable enough, if a little plain in

appearance for my tastes, and it fitted me, kept the water out and worked very well.

The Inzert I used made a big difference to my diving, and for the first time in a long while I had no problem viewing my instruments and camera menus.

Having recently reviewed and marvelled at masks that boast "UltraClear" glazing, such as the Atomic Venom or Hollis M1 models, I'm left wondering if I could fit the Inzert rail to them.

That would be the ultimate solution for optical-appliance-users who dive, don't you think? ■

UNDERSUIT WATERPROOF BODYTEC DUAL LAYER

I REMEMBER BUYING MY first trilaminate drysuit. I had the choice of a range of undersuits to go with it, and picked out a one-piece boilersuit design.

It wasn't very warm, as it transpired, and it didn't stretch either, cutting into my nether regions every time I bent down and causing my voice to rise an octave or two. It still makes my eyes water just thinking about it.

In those days there were few options, and I ended up using some thermal underwear from the Marks & Spencer range, which proved to be comfortable but left me shivering after every dive.

These days there are lots of base layers in hi-tech fabrics from which to choose, and I've been trying out the latest model from those Swedish coldwater diving gurus at Waterproof.

The Design

New for 2014, the Bodytec Dual Layer is a low-bulk two-piece garment which, as the name suggests, is built with twin layers of 260g/sq m polyester fibre fleece with a Spandex outer skin.

The seams are flat-lock-stitched in an orange nylon thread. Embroidered Waterproof logos and screen-printed livery add a touch of colour and style, so you won't look too much like the Milk Tray Man.

The cuffs and heels have loops to keep everything in place when donning your drysuit and a drawstring waist on the bottoms coupled with the extended tail on the top should put an end to chilled kidneys.

In Use

Remember all that rain at the beginning of the year? My house was pretty badly affected by rising waters, and I spent a lot of time with neighbours building up riverbanks and clearing ditches, wearing my drysuit with the Bodytec underneath.

I also managed to get some diving in, I'm glad to say, so can report my findings with some conviction. This little twin-set number was excellent.

The dual layers wicked away moisture from my exertions and kept my skin dry and subsequently warm. The Spandex, while not flattering for my body shape, proved very flexible and, moving around, I had no problems with unwanted pressure around my delicate areas or under my armpits.

Under water there seemed to be little if any variation in the thermal properties as my depth changed.

What I did notice, however, was just how warm, dry and comfy I felt in this combination.



Above: Don't worry, Nige, it looks better than you think!

Conclusion

After a few months of wear in a variety of situations the Bodytec Dual Layer suit has been through the washing machine about a dozen times and still doesn't look any the worse for its ordeal.

It fits nicely under my drysuits without creating unwanted bulk, and is as toasty-warm as a toasty-warm thing.

The only problem is that I can't make it look good on my compact little body.

Luckily, we all know that there's no such thing as dignity in the diving world! ■

SPECS

PRICES ▶▶ Bodytec Dual Layer Top £60, Bottoms £56

SIZES ▶▶ Unisex XS, S, M, ML, L, XL, XXL, 3XL

CONTACT ▶▶ www.waterproof.eu, www.cpspartnership.co.uk

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★☆☆

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Deeper into Diving

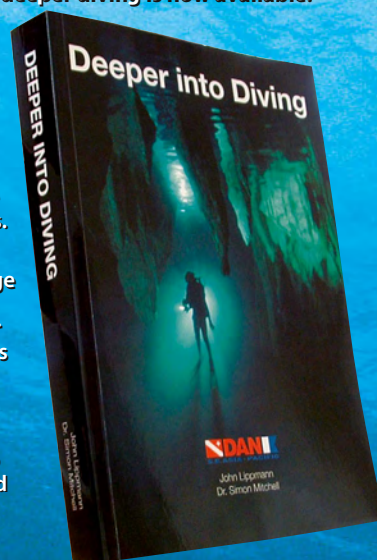
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NEW BUT UNTESTED

The latest kit to hit the dive shops



Hugyfot PRO GoPro Housing ▲▲▲▲

Hugyfot has released an underwater housing package for the popular GoPro Hero3 and Hero3+ high-definition video cameras. It includes the GoPro housing, a mounting-plate with two arms, and 25mm balls for external light attachment. It also features a separate housing for the LCD screen, and an external battery-pack that is said to extend life for up to six hours of filming, even while using the LCD screen and a flip-up red filter. Optional extras include a macro lens-holder (M67 or M77), a magenta filter and the possibility to fit a variety of cable lengths between the GoPro housing and the monitor housing, making it suitable for pole-cam work, ROV and other applications. Expect to pay £1049 through distributor Blue Orb.

►► www.blueorbltd.com

Typhoon

Neo Quantum Air Drysuit ►►►

Typhoon says its new suit, made from 3mm Super Flex high-density neoprene, is the lightest in its class. It features Super Soft Glide neoprene neck- and wrist-seals with Typhoon's new Warm Neck system, blind-stitched and taped seams, an all-metal heavy-duty rear dry-zip, two expandable zipped hip pockets, rubberised knee-pads and thermo-lined boots. Apeks valves are standard and the Neo Quantum Air comes with hood, bag and changing mat. It comes in 10 sizes from XS to LB and costs £649.

►► www.typhoon-int.co.uk



Fourth Element Argo Bag & Mat ▲▲▲▲

Fourth Element has added a drybag to its growing product range. The Argo is a zipperless design made from a hard-wearing fabric and has "high frequency" welded waterproof seams. A capacity of 44 litres should be enough to take a drysuit and undersuit or everything you need for an adventurous weekend away. The large changing mat could be a useful addition –made from the same materials as the bag, it can be rolled up and secured using elasticated loops on the bag. The bag costs around £60 and the mat an extra £15.

►► www.fourthelement.com



FIT Pro Series LED Lights ◀◀◀

The FIT Pro Series range of LED lights now includes the 1200 lumen, 2400 lumen and 2400 lumen with UV options.

Said to be robust and very compact, they all come with either ball or YS mounts for fixing to camera housing-arm systems.

Multiple modes include Flood (110° with no hotspots), Spot, Red, White/Red mixes for warmer colour temperatures and SOS Flashing. Burntimes are stated to be one hour for the 2400l and 90 minutes for the 1200l on full power. In Red light mode the 2400l is said to last for up to five hours. The 1200l costs £250, the 2400l is £375 and the 2400l with UV options £550. Replacement batteries cost £25.

►► www.uwvisions.com

Diviac Cloud-Based Logbook ▼▼▼▼

This app is said to work on all operating systems and devices, allowing direct data upload from any computer or Android device. Diviac has partnered with DiveMate USB, said to be the only Android app to offer direct "dive computer to mobile device" connectivity, allowing buddies to digitally validate and copy each other's logs. Diviac also includes a marine-life database with 14,000-plus species, as well as a database of more than 8000 dive operators, which it combines with diver reviews. The basic plan is free, but standard and premium plans cost US \$15 and \$20 per year respectively.

►► www.diviac.com





Waterproof W-Breaker Jacket ▲▲▲▲

New from the Swedish Waterproof range of apparel comes the gender-specific windproof and breathable W-Breaker. The maker claims that this lightweight garment combines the best of fabrics and breathable wind insulation in a jacket that boasts adjustable chord locks to give full volume control. Stretchy underarm panels are designed to enhance mobility. Other features include a detachable hood with wired peak and laminated brim, a PK10 zip with a stainless-steel slider and zipped pockets and non-abrasive moulded cuff-tabs. There are six men's sizes from S-XXL and six women's, XS-XL. The price is £128.

► www.waterproof.eu



Mares Prestige MRS Plus BC ▼▼▼▼

The jacket-style Prestige MRS Plus has been updated and refined, says Mares. It has a 1000 denier Cordura outer shell with a bigger bladder to give 24kg of lift in XL size. Comfort is said to have been enhanced by adding a pivoting buckle system and extra padding on shoulder-straps in "perfect symmetry" with the wearer's upper body. The back area has extra padding and a non-slip coating. The new inflator is said to be more ergonomic than its predecessor. Completing the package are integrated weights with a capacity of 6kg per side and two trim-weight pockets taking 2kg each, along with two large 3D pockets, knife-retainer and four stainless-steel D-rings, and it all costs £310.

► www.mares.com



Ikelite S120 & Recsea WHC-S120 Housings ◀◀◀

Underwater housings for the innovative Canon Powershot S120 compact camera are now available from both Ikelite and Recsea. The Ikelite S120 is made from clear blended polycarbonate with a 60m depth rating. An M67 filter thread allows direct attachment of wide and macro lenses. Lighting trays with Ikelite's 2point mounting system are needed for external strobe and arm attachment. It costs £280. Recsea's WHC-S120 is made of aluminium alloy and rated to 100m. It has a fixed port and is said to be compatible with most tray and arm systems. It weighs in at 650g and costs £650.

► www.camerasunderwater.co.uk

Z IS FOR ZANZIBAR

Diver seeks new home with easy access to decent diving. Will an Indian Ocean island meet his needs?



AARON GEROSKI

NEXT ISSUE

WHEN IN WAKATOBI

Indonesian resort with a reputation to protect

THE SCHOOL YEAR

Diving is on the syllabus for these pupils

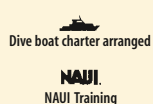
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Photo-guru Saeed Rashid opens up his dive-bag

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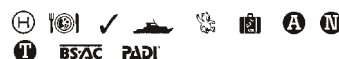
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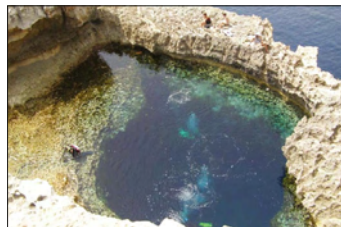


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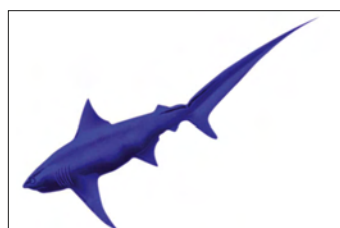
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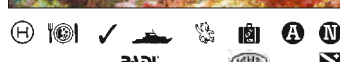
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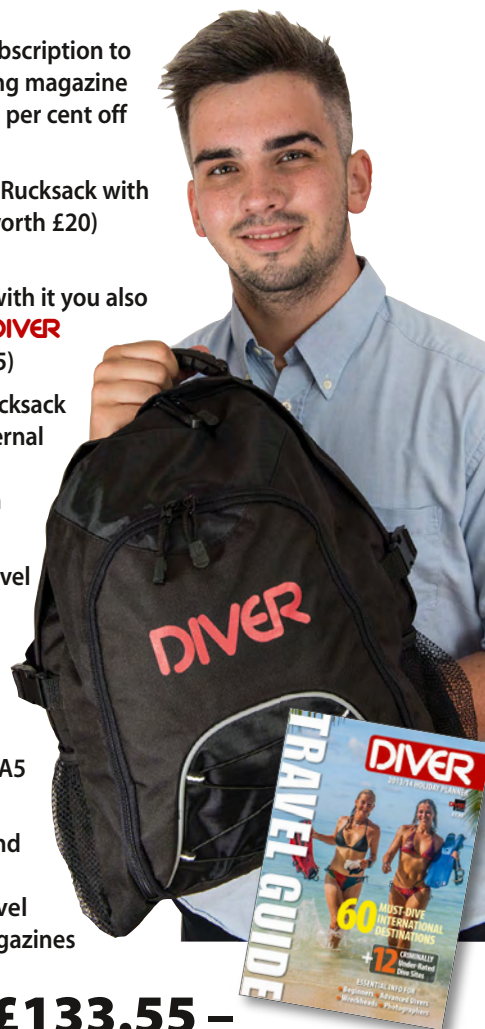
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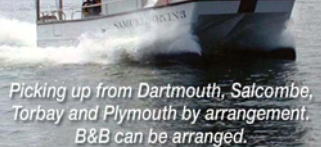
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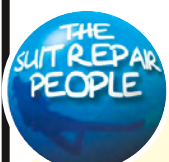
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Chelmsford and District SAC meet at 8pm every Friday at Riverside Pool. New and qualified divers are welcome. See our website for details: www.chelmsforddivelub.co.uk (38373)

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Ellon Sub Aqua Club, Aberdeenshire, welcomes newcomers and experienced divers. We dive year round and meet on Thursday evenings. Contact www.ellonsubaclub.co.uk (30355)

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Whisper it **softly**, eating shark is so **last year**

He has long argued that cutting demand in the prime market for fins is the only way to save the world's sharks, and now **RICHARD PEIRCE** sees a movement gathering pace

WE WILL NEVER SOLVE the problem of trying to reduce or regulate supply. Unless and until we do something about the demand, we will be fighting a losing battle."

That's a South African vet talking about the scourge of rhino-poaching. It could as easily have been me talking about the shark-fin trade.

Hard, credible figures are almost non-existent when it comes to the global harvesting of shark fins. For many years the only available scientifically researched figures were those of Dr Shelley Clarke.

Her research started in 2000, and she concluded that the worldwide number of sharks killed each year for their fins was between 26 and 73 million. Her best guesstimate was in the middle, at 38m.

The highest figure I have seen in print is 200m, and 100m is the one most quoted. It may not be possible for scientists, activists and conservation campaigners to agree a figure, and indeed figures are often manipulated to suit individual needs, but what can be agreed on is the trend.

The broadbrush statement that many shark species are being unsustainably overfished is agreed by credible scientists and conservationists the world over.

I have been involved in shark conservation for about 25 years, watching demand for shark fins rise inexorably. Shark eco-tourism continues to gain popularity, with divers leading the way, travelling the world to find new shark experiences. The general trend is that as time goes by they report seeing fewer sharks.

Reports from fisheries are also of reducing catches, so the evidence supports the unsustainability argument. Logic dictates that unsustainability leads to extinction.

CHINA CONSUMES 95% of the world's shark fins. At the height of its popularity shark-fin soup cost up to £180 a bowl, and in markets fins sold for more than \$700 a kilo.

I visited Beijing in 2011 to present Shark Trust "Shark Champion" awards to three people who were proposing measures to the two Chinese legislative bodies to ban the import of shark fins.

My visit convinced me that not only would change come in China, but that it would be home-grown Chinese change. The question was whether it would come fast enough to relieve the pressure on

vulnerable shark populations.

I was told then that within 15 years the number of Chinese middle-class consumers would have risen by 250m. For sharks and other wildlife this increase in consumers almost made conservation seem like mission impossible. However, many people at work in China didn't believe in mission impossible.

San Francisco-based wildlife campaigning group WildAid has been quietly working away in China for years. In 2006 it recruited one of China's leading celebrities to lead a public-awareness campaign.

Yao Min was a professional basketball player who played for Houston Rockets. His graphic TV ads had a profound effect on Chinese young people, and other Chinese celebrities joined the awareness movement.



From another angle, businessman-turned-environmentalist Jim Zhang began working towards seeking a ban on fin imports. Joined by two fellow-members of the exclusive Entrepreneurs Club, Mr Wan Jie and Mr Ding Ligu, in 2011 they put a proposal before the legislative assemblies.

This was rejected, but in July 2012 the government agreed to ban shark-fin soup from all its official banquets within three years.

Then, as part of its campaign against extravagant spending, officials throughout China were ordered to ban lavish banquets serving luxury and exotic foods. Only ordinary foods would be served – a very positive step for sharks and other wildlife.

In September 2012 Hong Kong's government issued similar instructions to "demonstrate its commitment to green living and sustainability".

Chinese state TV reported that restaurants were serving fake shark-fin soup using gelatine, seaweed gum and starch.

There were also reports that many soup samples had been found to contain dangerous levels of cadmium and methyl mercury.

The effects of these actions were soon evident. The Ministry of Commerce reported a 70% reduction in consumption over the 2013 Spring Break Holiday compared to the year before.

Interviewed in October at Beijing's Lianhong Marine Dry Products Market, some traders reported that trade in shark fins was down by 70%. In Hong Kong there were reports that imports had declined by 20-30%, prices dropping by similar percentages.

Across the Far East, hotels, airlines and restaurants are removing shark-fin soup from menus. There are reports of specialist restaurants in Beijing and Shanghai closing down, and others no longer serving the soup.

While the Chinese government and individual campaigners have been working to reduce demand, others elsewhere have acted to reduce supply.

In 2013 the EU Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) legislation effectively ended "finning" in EU waters, and by EU vessels wherever they fished.

Shark parks and sanctuaries were set up in the British Indian Ocean Territories (around the Chagos Islands), the Maldives, Mexico, Honduras and others. California banned the sale, possession, trade or distribution of fins, and this year New Zealand puts into law a ban on shark-finning.

MANY WILL QUESTION the statistics coming out of China and the Far East. Hard figures are difficult to come by, and the basis for calculating them can often be disputed.

However, just as catch and consumption figures indicated a trend, so now do figures coming from consumer markets – and the trend seems to be a very welcome downward one.

In January 2014 the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Shark Specialist Group reported that of the world's 1041 shark, skate, ray and chimera species one quarter are threatened, and only one third considered safe – a smaller proportion than in any other vertebrate group.

China's ban on shark-fin soup at official functions indicated disapproval, and this together with action from people like Yao Min has had a huge influence.

Among China's young affluent professional classes, eating shark-fin soup is rapidly becoming socially unacceptable – uncool.

The only way to save the world's sharks is to reduce or eliminate demand. It's far too early to breathe a sigh of relief, but there are real grounds for optimism.

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